SYRIA FROM THE SADDLE

TERHUNE

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. DS157 Copyright No.

Shelf .T31

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

"I LOOKED LIKE SOMETHING BETWEEN AN ARAB AND A COWBOY." page 74.

Frontispiece.

SYRIA FROM THE SADDLE

BY

ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

399706B2-1

SILVER, BURDETT AND COMPANY

NEW YORK BOSTON CHICAGO

1896

Copyright, 1896,
By SILVER, BURDETT & COMPANY.

AS 107
.T31

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith
Norwood Mass. U.S.A.

LC Control Number
tmp96 026067

To

MY MOST INTIMATE FRIEND,

MY FELLOW-WANDERER IN MANY LANDS,

My Mother,

THIS STORY OF A BRIEF SOJOURN IN THE EAST

IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED.

INTRODUCTORY.

I HAVE not aimed, in writing this book, to throw new light on matters scientific, archæological, or historical, relating to the Holy Land. A thousand weighty — and unread — tomes on such subjects already exist; and for an unlearned layman to dabble in this lore, or to seek to follow, even afar off, in the footsteps of the horde of clergymen and savants who have dissected Palestine for centuries, would be an act of crass and futile presumption.

This little work makes no such pretensions. It is simply the story of a desultory sojourn in a land where the most careless wanderer must feel that he is treading on holy ground. It is a description of the Holy Land of to-day, as seen through a young man's eyes. I have sincerely tried to avoid other than the most reverent treatment of religious subjects and associations, and to glean a few great historical and sacred facts from the mass of foolish and priestly traditions that surround every landmark of the country.

If my book is not that of a scholar, it is at least the tale of a traveler who felt deeply the more than human interest that must always cling to that dead land which was the cradle of our great Faith. The record gathers, from political events in the Orient following closely upon my return to America, an interest not its own. On reviewing parts of it in the light of late Eastern

events, an incident of my stay in Jerusalem recurs to me with a significance I did not perceive at the time.

In December, 1893, foreign consuls throughout Asia Minor were directed officially to enforce a decree ordering the expulsion from the Sultan's domains, within ten days, of all who, once Turkish subjects, had become naturalized citizens of other countries. English and American residents in Jerusalem, Beirût, Damascus, and other Syrian towns, at once took alarm and predicted serious trouble in Armenia. It was said, once and again, in my careless hearing, that the imperial mandate could mean but one thing : it was aimed directly at Armenian Christians. The Turkish government hoped to avoid complications with Christian nations by ridding the land of those who, in the event of a movement against the doomed race, would be, nominally at least, under the protection of foreign flags.

The order was not a despotic caprice, but the prologue to the bloodiest tragedy that has been enacted within five centuries. Calling to mind what has happened since the ominous decree, it seems incredible that neither England nor the United States protested against, or so much as instituted formal inquiry into the meaning of, an act that was clearly either arbitrary in cruelty, or else a useless display of authority. It is of course too late to speculate as to what would have been the result of such prompt and humane action. Yet, with the facts in the case before them, the sadly enlightened public will murmur, and the private Christian citizen will draw his own conclusions.

Albert Payson Terhune.

New York, 1896.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	First Impressions — Gehenen — Some Arab Horses	13
II.	Cafés Chantants in Beirût — A Professional Story-teller and his Story	23
III.	Pictured Rocks at Dog River — By *Diligence* to Damascus	31
IV.	Damascus Streets and Bazaars	43
V.	Naaman House of Lepers, Damascus	52
VI.	House of Rich Damascene Jew — Damascus Massacre	59
VII.	Horse Market — Call to Prayer — Again in the Saddle	68
VIII.	Across Country — Camp Life	76
IX.	The "Aryan Brown" — Marriage Customs — The Druses	84
X.	A Syrian Wedding Reception — A Cloud-burst	94
XI.	Rainy Sunday in Camp — To Cæsarea Philippi	103
XII.	Luncheon at Dan — Syrian Khans	111
XIII.	My Friends, the Bedouins	118
XIV.	A Midnight Visitor — In the Tents of Ishmael	128
XV.	One of Joseph's Pits — Sea of Galilee	139
XVI.	Capernaum — Tiberias	149
XVII.	Story of a Lordling's Scrape — Bedouin Bandit — Cana in Galilee	157
XVIII.	In Nazareth — A House of Mourning	164
XIX.	Esdraelon — Nain — Jezreel — Gideon's Fountain — Gilboa	176

CHAPTER		PAGE
XX.	Jenin — Samaria — Nablous	184
XXI.	Joseph's Tomb — Jacob's Well — Robber's Valley — Bethel	193
XXII.	Night in a Monastery — Bird's-eye View of Jerusalem	201
XXIII.	Jerusalem Cranks — Jewish Wailing Place — Holy City by Moonlight	211
XXIV.	Mosque of Omar — Church of the Holy Sepulchre — The New Calvary — Solomon's Quarries	222
XXV.	Mount of Olives — Gethsemane — Bethany — At Sunset	232
XXVI.	Christmas Pageant at Bethlehem — Church of the Nativity	241
XXVII.	Midnight Mass in the Church of the Nativity — Chant of the Pilgrims — A Christmas Dinner	250
XXVIII.	Valley of the Kedron — *En route* for Jericho — Ravens or Arabs?	259
XXIX.	Dead Sea Fruit — Modern Jericho — The Dead Sea — The Jordan	269
XXX.	Around the Camp-Fire — Tales and Songs of the Camp	281
XXXI.	Mar Saba — Greek Christmas at Bethlehem — Hebron	289
XXXII.	Departure from Jerusalem — Through the Land of the Philistines — A Man of Gath — Jaffa	302
XXXIII.	Jaffa Harbor — "'Twixt the Devil and the Deep Sea" — A Bad Quarter of an Hour — On Board	311

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE

"I looked like something between an Arab and a cowboy" *Frontispiece*

Beirût. View from the Grounds of American College . . 13

Oriental Beggars 17

Damascus 41

City Wall — where St. Paul was let down 50

"A Gorilla-like Negro" 51

"The Street that is called Straight" 54

House of Rich Jew 60

David Jamal 74

Our Camp 76

Bedouins near the Grave of Nimrod 78

After Luncheon 86

"Hermon was just above us" 100

Sheik of the Village 106

Two-story Khans 111

Bedouins in Council 120

Tiberias 145

The Wandering Field of Joseph 149

Capernaum — "Desolation, Ruins, and Tangled Grass" . . 152

Nazareth, "the City of Christ" 165

The Fountain of the Virgin 167

PAGE

"An Empty Coffin was carried on the Shoulders of Four Men," 175

Fellah sowing Grain 180

Site of Ancient Samaria 189

Ruins of Market-place of Ancient Samaria 190

Street Loafers in Nablous 193

Jaffa Gate: Entrance to Jerusalem 209

Jews' Wailing Place 214

Jerusalem. Mosque of Omar in the background 219

Entrance of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre 225

Garden of Gethsemane 233

Bethany 237

Rachel's Tomb 241

Elijah's Rock 242

"They crowded Housetop and Terrace" 245

Bethlehem Bride 247

Bethlehem 255

Ruins of a Roman Watch-tower 259

Tomb of Absalom 261

Ancient Jericho 271

The River Jordan 275

The Dead Sea 279

Pilgrims entering Bethlehem at Christmas-time 295

Fountain of Solomon 297

Jaffa 309

Beirût — from the Grounds of American College.

SYRIA FROM THE SADDLE.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS — GEHENEN — SOME ARAB HORSES.

ALL the day before our ship had lain off Jaffa. I was safe to see enough of Palestine during the next few months; so I had resisted the pleadings of a swarm of boatmen, guides, and hotel porters who wished to show me the wonders of their city; and had contented myself with watching from deck the line of low, bleak hills, the gray town of Jaffa clinging to the mountain-side, and the crazy breakwater alive with boats. We had started on again at nightfall, passing the Carmel light-house before midnight, and reaching Beirût about six in the morning.

The town, more picturesque and modern than Jaffa, rises from the shore to the hill summit, the white and

yellow houses brightened by gardens and palm trees. It is capped by the American College buildings. To the left the Lebanon range, running out to sea, forms an arm of the harbor.

A crowd of gaudily dressed natives surrounded the steamer, clambering over our bulwarks, or shouting to us from their boats in half a dozen languages and a hundred different keys.

Long lines of men carried goods from the hold, and became hopelessly entangled with a horde of venders who were trying to sell "genuine Syrian antiquities,"— probably fresh from Birmingham, — and these venders in turn were jostled by the army of boatmen and guides who had come on board to pick up victims — or customers, as they would call them. The result of the conflicting crowds was a modern edition of Babel; and I had begun to wonder if it would ever end and let us go ashore, when a man stepped out of the struggling mass and came toward me. He was of middle height, broad, and powerfully built, and had an air of grave dignity oddly out of place in that throng. I knew him already by reputation, and had seen his photograph, so there was little question in my greeting:

"You are David Jamal?"

He had been engaged to meet me at Beirût and act as my dragoman through the country. As I shall often mention him, a few words of description may not be amiss.

I had experiences with many dragomans during my sojourn in the East, and found in all the number but three who were really worth their hire. The rest were phonographic machines (frequently out of order) with

truly civilized proficiency in the arts of laziness and petty theft. The three exceptions I found to this rule were Abraham Ayoub of Damascus, Demetrius Domian of Jerusalem, and — head and shoulders above all others — David Jamal.

Jamal is descended from an excellent Christian family of Jerusalem, but owing to his father's heavy losses, he was forced in youth to take up the trade of dragoman. Studying the Bible in connection with the geography of his own country, he not only familiarized himself with every mile of ground, but learned every historical or sacred episode connected with it; sifting away the thousand traditions that surround each fact, and becoming a veritable walking guide-book. Then, turning to the task of lessening the discomforts of cross-country travel, he reduced them to a minimum. The *fellaheen* (peasants) and even troublesome Bedouin tribes have learned to know and respect him, so that his travelers pass in security through places that are anything but safe to the average tourist. His descent from a good family has freed him from the ill-breeding common to most dragomans. Throughout our whole trip I never once saw him ruffled, disrespectful, or out of temper; which, as I crossed the country during the exasperating rainy season, is not a little to say.

With this dragoman it was my lot to travel, and by his efforts I was enabled to see much that usually passes unnoticed by travelers through Syria.

I pointed out my luggage, and, as soon as it could be carried into David's boat, we rowed for the custom house. Five minutes later found me in the midst of a scene that cast the shipboard turmoil far into the

shade. It fairly took my breath away, and I no longer wondered that the Arab word for the custom house is *gehenen* (hell). I was forced — a *fin de siècle* Dante, with David for my Virgil — to watch the workings of this *gehenen* for half an hour until my own turn came.

A band of Syrians had just come back from the World's Fair; and their less fortunate fellow-countrymen, the officials, who had been forced to stay at home and work, seized this occasion to prove to their wandering brethren that a traveler's life is not one of unalloyed bliss. They set about this proof by opening all boxes and bags, declaring some things contraband, and strewing the floor with others. Some returned pilgrims whose passports were not properly *viséd*, opened a screaming controversy with officials; while some stumbled hard over their luggage, and then talked about it. Attendants constantly charged through the crowd, hauling boxes, or ejecting troublesome natives. One rule was observed by all — to howl long and often. At the height of all this, my luggage was examined, found harmless, and carried out. We followed it; the noisy street outside seeming almost silent after the din we had left.

David sent the luggage ahead to the Hotel D'Orient; then he and I took a carriage to follow. Before we could start, however, a mob of beggars surrounded us, with the cry one so often reads of: "*Backsheesh! howaji, backsheesh!*"

The Oriental beggar is unlike any Western specimen of his class that I have ever seen. Loathsome, diseased, and unwashed at best, disgusting means are taken to make the Eastern mendicant's plight even worse than

nature intended. Cripples came around us, with dirty rags wrapped about their injured arms and legs; blind men with festering sockets for eyes; and, most repul-

Oriental Beggars.

sive of all, to me, men, well-built throughout most of their bodies, but with a bare hand and arm, or foot, as the case may be, of the size and shape of a new-born baby's, — dangling limply, or thrust into the face of some pos-

sible almsgiver. Whether these unfortunates are born thus, or whether in infancy the arm or leg is swathed to keep it from growing, I could never learn. I know that people so afflicted are proud of their deformity, and are the envy of other beggars who have no such drawing-card to help them make money.

I soon forgot these unfortunates in looking at the people and houses we passed; and in noting the contrast between such sights and one of our American streets. With us, we see red brick and brown stone buildings, and men in hideously cut suits of black, gray, and brown. Here, in Beirût, fashions are lenient and lasting. The brilliant *tarbusch* (fez), the brown and white *abieh*, or outer mantle, falling in long folds from shoulder to knee, — doubtless the identical style of mantle thrown back by Elijah on his journey to Heaven, — the colored robe and belt beneath it, or the vest and bagging trousers, according to the wearer's taste; the odd foot-gear; the swords and flashy dress of dragomans, and multi-colored costumes of the townsfolk, varied by the white, veiled, and shapeless forms of native women — all swayed and mingled like the moving colors of a kaleidoscope.

Strings of mangy camels went by; donkeys and horses blocked the road; and ugly stray curs, usually yellow, with pointed noses and mean faces, sneaked under carts, or slept in patches of sunlight. These dogs are ownerless (no native owns a dog in the East) and act as city scavengers, eating all offal and carrion; thus saving people the trouble of cleaning their streets or burying dead animals.

The lower streets are narrow, tortuous, and, of course,

dirty. Each side of the way is lined with low built shops, *cafés*, and bazaars; almost all of these open on the street. Men sit on the narrow sidewalk, — when there is a sidewalk, — playing chess or drinking coffee. Climbing the hill, we came to wider white roads, with separate yellow and white houses, red-roofed, and surrounded by palms and cactus hedges. Mosque domes and white minarets rise here and there, standing out against the blue sky.

Almost all cities have some distinctive color. A dingy gray characterizes London; our American cities reflect the red and brown of their houses; but the prevailing tint in the East is white. However dirty the interior may be, the city, from a bird's-eye view, is almost sure to look white, and the glare of the sun makes it seem even whiter. Beirût is quite European when compared with many Syrian towns, but to a traveler who makes his first Eastern stop there, it seems like a new world.

I noticed on the forelock or reins of many horses and donkeys a blue bead, and asked David its use. He told me it was a charm against the evil eye. The evil-eye superstition in the East is somewhat different from that in Italy. In Syria, the natives fear the "evil eye of envy," and believe that if some possession of theirs is coveted, it will sicken and die. Hence they fasten the blue bead on all their best horses, and even about their children's necks. I have seen native children whom their parents thought beautiful, dressed in rags that they might not attract the eye of envy.

My first few days were taken up in wandering through out-of-the-way native places; studying a myr-

iad new phases of life; and in trying and choosing horses for the journey to Jerusalem. This last occupation was most pleasant of all. The average Syrian horse is not the Arab steed whose portrait we see in tea-chromos. That style of horse, when he does exist, is found in the Land of Moab, or the desert, and then in a very modified form. For a long, rough journey, such as we were to take, he would be worse than useless. The horses chosen for such a journey are little larger than our own bronchos. They are full of spirit, practically tireless, and as sure-footed as mountain goats.

This sure-footedness is decidedly necessary in traveling through Syria, where one is constantly obliged to ride over steep, pathless mountains or down rocky river-beds. Through all my rough riding, I never saw one of these horses fall. If they ever stumble, it is more likely to be on some smooth, safe road.

I once had to ride up a flight of slippery, moss-grown steps, and then down the other side; and my horse took it as quietly and safely as an American horse would travel his mile in a park bridle-path.

The Arabs and Syrians use saddles that look more like flattened meal-bags than anything else. Their stirrups are shovel-like in shape, and the stirrup-leathers are drawn so short that the rider's knee is on a level with his saddle.

Thus, instead of grasping the horse with the knee, they use the calf of the leg, — their sharp-cornered stirrups serving as spurs. This fashion of riding is most awkward for beginners; and though I soon learned it, I think our American method is not only

far more graceful, but gives the rider more control over his mount. The horses guide by the neck, and have few gaits, — the walk, canter, and run being most common. Stallions are ridden almost universally. Being fed on barley instead of oats, they are usually quite gentle.

I tried several mounts, but at last settled on two; one for steady riding, and one in case my regular horse became lame or ill.

I chose for everyday use a little white horse named Massoud. He had a meek and lowly air, and gentleness seemed to hang on him like a garment. I was afraid he would not suit me, as he seemed too quiet for any one but a lady to ride. But I mounted him for a trial-ride, and striking him with the sharp stirrups, slapped him on the shoulder by way of rousing him. I succeeded: I have never seen a horse more thoroughly aroused. He started at a dead run; then, jumping high in the air, bucked, kicked, whirled half-way around, and set off once more on a series of canters and gallops, interspersed with bucks and sudden turns. Had I used an Arab saddle at the time, I must certainly have been thrown. As it was, we kept up the performance for nearly half an hour, — until he sobered down for the time; then I rode back with the conviction that, on such a horse, — no matter how monotonous the route, — I need never suffer from *ennui*. When other attractions failed, he could always be relied on to create a diversion.

We grew to be great friends, Massoud and I. But he never let friendship interfere with business. Each morning I used to give him a lump of sugar and pat

him. He was always grateful, and would lay his head most affectionately against my coat. But as soon as I mounted, amicable relations were suspended and the business of the day begun. My part of it was to reach my destination; and his was, by dint of every trick his Oriental brain could devise, to kill me before I got there.

I selected him for my first mount, and took for a substitute a little terra cotta beast with a Roman nose.

CHAPTER II.

CAFÉS CHANTANTS IN BEIRÛT — A PROFESSIONAL STORY-TELLER AND HIS STORY.

BEIRÛT, as the largest and most European town in Syria, holds more places of amusement than Jerusalem or Damascus.

Open-air *cafés,* where liquor and nargilehs are served on marble-topped tables, are plentiful, and look like colorless reflections of the Parisian boulevard *cafés.* These civilized resorts offer little inducement to foreigners, but the regular coffee-house patronized by middle and lower class natives is decidedly interesting. David piloted me to one of these the evening after my arrival.

The place consisted of a single room, one side open on the street; a low bench running about the three other sides; above, a shelf covered with nargilehs and bottles; while in one corner burned a brazier where fresh coffee was constantly made. Beside it stood a tray of small coffee cups.

The room, like most Eastern places of amusement, was utterly without decoration. Such resorts are, per-

force, rigidly plain. The Mohammedan religion forbids pictures, and hangings would be ruined by the smoke. When we reached the *café*, at least forty men were seated on the long bench, or on stools and mats drawn around the one chair of the establishment. On this chair sat a striking figure: a tall, slender man dressed eccentrically in a hybrid suit.

Red shoes and checked European trousers covered the lower half of his body; while a close-fitting scarlet vest embroidered with gold thread, white puff-sleeves, shaped like those worn by women in our own country, and a red tarbusch set on the back of his head among a mass of curls, completed his costume. His face, unlike the grave, immobile countenances of the crowd about him, was alight with interest, the expression changing every second; his dark eyes rolling in anger one moment; a look of sorrow or fear coming into them the next. He gesticulated wildly, and spoke, now in deep guttural tones, now in high falsetto. His audience regarded him with solemn interest, occasionally nodding or whispering to each other. The attendants moved about noiselessly, pausing to listen whenever the speaker's voice rose to some special climax, then, as it subsided, moving on again.

At last the orator looked about, clapped his hands over his head, and stopped speaking. He gazed into space during a silence of more than a minute, then broke the stillness with a shout, and continued his speech.

"What is going on? Political primaries?" I had whispered to David during the brief pause.

"What are political primaries, sir?" he asked.

I saw the folly of my question and did not repeat it, but asked what the speaker had been saying.

"He is a professional story-teller," answered David. "Poor people come here who cannot afford to go to one of the expensive places. They pay a penny for coffee, and then another penny apiece to this man, and he tells them stories all the evening. He has just finished one, and he will begin another in a minute."

Anxious to hear what wonderful tale could thus hold fifty grown men's attention a whole evening, I asked David to translate the next story as it went on. I had scarcely finished my request, when the narrator began to speak, David following him with a whispered translation. I give the plot as nearly as I can remember it:

There was once a prince (or sheik) who loved the daughter of a king who ruled a country across the desert. The sheik was poor, after the manner of heroes; and the king would not give him his daughter, but said she should marry a richer prince who was in his court.

The young prince watched his chance, stole the girl from her father's palace, and rode off with her. They had ridden a day's journey when they saw the king and his followers in hot pursuit. The sheik and his little party turned and attacked the pursuers, enacting such prodigies of valor that the king's men were beaten. The lover raised his sword to kill the king, but the daughter (Pocahontas-like) threw herself between them and begged her father's life, which the prince, with true fairy-tale generosity, granted.

The king, grateful for his deliverance, forgave the ~~the~~ lovers and invited them to come back to his court.

The sheik accepted the invitation and, dismissing his followers, rode back with his father-in-law. Hardly, however, had they reached the palace when his majesty ordered the youth to be bound and buried up to the neck in earth, forbidding all people to succor him.

In this uncomfortable state the unhappy sheik remained for three days, until a friend went secretly to his brother and told him the story. The brother raised an army and engaged the king in a prolonged and circumstantially related battle, in which, as far as I could gather, every combatant killed at least twenty men. How, from a sordid mathematical standpoint, they reconciled this Oriental Kilkenny cat problem, when they came to settle up at the end of the row, I don't pretend to say. In Eastern war-stories a hero seems to be of no earthly use unless, single-handed, he can kill anywhere from fifty to a hundred opponents or put a whole troop to flight.

I left the *café* in the middle of this interesting battle so I shall never know the outcome. Whether the half-buried sheik was released by his brother, or wholly interred by the king, must ever remain a mystery.

I have repeated the story at length to show in how slight things an Eastern audience may be interested. It is impossible to imagine an American restaurant crowd listening for three hours to the tale of Ali-Baba and the Forty Thieves, or Bluebeard. But realism in literature has not yet reached Syria, and at coffee-house recitals the romantic school is still all-powerful. Such an audience would make the fortune of a Western theatrical manager.

We went another evening to a native theater. David

assured me that it was his first visit to such a place, and I believe him. A respectable married dragoman's taste would scarcely run in the line of many of that evening's "specialties." Much of the performance, however, was quite proper. The theater would have seated five hundred people and was little more than half-filled. Like the *café*, it was undecorated. No women were in the audience and I was the only foreigner.

The first part of the performance was under way when we entered. On the stage (a mere platform devoid of scenery) sat three men and two women, playing on native musical instruments and singing. After one or two songs, one of the women — a beautiful Jewish girl with Greek features — came to the footlights (or where they should have been) and began to dance. I had heard much of the dreamy dances of the East and leaned back prepared to be enchanted. I was doomed to disappointment. The dance consisted of a rather awkward shuffling of the feet and infinite wavings of the hands in time to a slow, tuneless chant.

I have seen many terpsichoreans in Syria in different native dances, — dances for every occasion, from weddings to funerals, — and none of them were in the slightest degree interesting or graceful. At the World's Fair in Chicago so-called Syrian dances were introduced that caused much comment and even censure. These were merely adapted to draw crowds (as the managers themselves said), and in no way resembled their real native dances. The World's Fair Syrian dances are never danced in Syria itself.

The girl followed the dance with a song in praise of

her lover. Many expressions in this were like passages from Solomon's Song, the similes and metaphors being sometimes almost identical with those in the "Song of Songs." Little in Eastern poetry has changed since the days of the poet-king. His great Love-Song was probably droned in this same minor key, by old-time Israelitish maidens and accompanied by some such swaying of head and arms. I quote a few lines from the Beirût girl's song, as I jotted them down at the time from Jamal's literal translation: —

"I called to my beloved, but he heard me not.

"Lo, thou art beautiful.

"Thine eyes are like the eyes of a deer; thine eyebrows are as a sword; thy hair is like fine silk and thy mouth a scarlet band. Thou art tall and stately like the palm-tree.

"Behold I stand knocking at thy door early in the morning, seeking to enter.

"Search my heart, and thou wilt find in it naught but love for thee."

This is not altogether unlike Solomon's lines: —

"His head is as the most fine gold . . . his eyes are as the eyes of doves . . . Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet . . . This thy stature is like a palm-tree . . . My beloved that knocketh, saying, 'Open to me.'"

The girl went on, after this poetical flight, to say that she would "go to Beirût to buy a coat for her beloved," combining ancient poetry with modern facts. The song over, she came down through the audience, passing around a tambourine for backsheesh; then, with the other performers, retired to dress for the play that was to follow.

During the *entr'acte* David told me the actors were Jews from Damascus; that they could not read or write; and that they themselves had composed (I cannot say, written) the play we were about to see. Not only had they composed the play itself, but they had learned and remembered lines, stage-business and all, without the aid of a single written word. To have mastered in this manner the three-act play we witnessed must have involved endless work.

I shall not recount the somewhat involved plot, more than to say that it dealt with the old story of a jealous miserly husband who had married a gay young wife.

The acting was extremely good, every one entering thoroughly into the spirit of the thing. True, all known laws of dramatic construction were thrown aside in a complete and decisive style that rather took away the breath of a witness accustomed to our own hard-and-fast rules. Stage "conventions" were more palpable than necessary, and many minor faults might be found. But none of these alter the fact that this complete and three-act comedy was composed and acted — acted well — by a troupe of uneducated, untrained Jews.

The performance, considering everything, was wonderful; even to the touch of naturalism, where the low comedian, being dunned by an importunate creditor, leaped from the stage and, pursued by his opponent, rushed for safety in and out among the audience.

The audience showed no more surprise or amusement than if one of the attendants had passed among them.

The only time during the entire evening that they

laughed, or even smiled, was when the stingy husband, reproached by his wife for starving her, exclaims: —

"Why, didn't I bring home a pound of meat, only six months ago?"

Personally, I fail to see any great wit in the above remark; but as the whole audience, hitherto impassive, roared with laughter, I suppose it was some rare gem of Arabic humor that lost luster in translation.

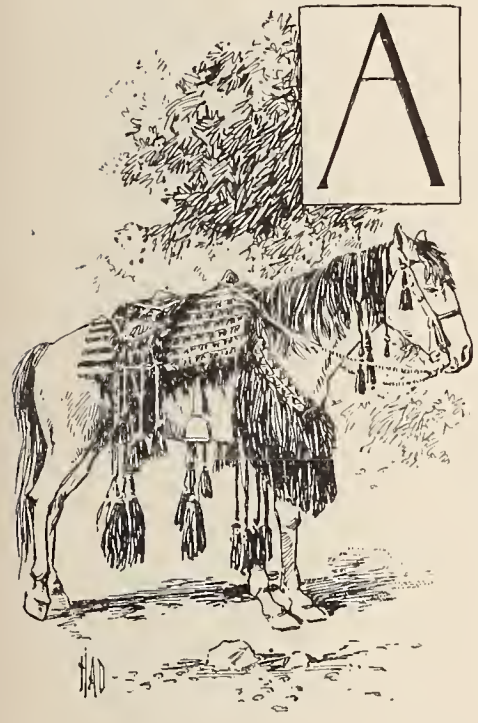
The pantomime following the play was interesting from the fact that, aside from the native costumes, it was precisely the same pantomime originated centuries ago in Italy; renewed in our days as "Humpty Dumpty," and as the English Christmas "Pantomime." How it crossed to Syria I do not know. But here it was — Columbine, Harlequin, and Pantaloon being none the less recognizable because of their Syrian dress. The Clown even wore the white suit and powdered mask by which he is so well known throughout the world.

An element of Rabelaisianism, borrowed no doubt direct from the mediæval Italian, ran through this Beirût performance, causing David to glance at me apologetically now and then, and once to repeat his former assertion that he had never before visited such places, and had had no idea what they were like.

At the end of the pantomime the entire cast came on, and closed the evening with a chant in praise of the Sultan, following — or perhaps having preceded — the American and European custom of closing a performance with the national hymn.

CHAPTER III.

PICTURED ROCKS AT DOG RIVER — BY DILIGENCE TO DAMASCUS.



A RIDING-PARTY, made up of the young doctors and the missionaries' daughters from the American College, was organized the day before I left Beirût. Our destination was the mountain of the Pictured Rocks, at Dog River. David had decked Massoud in gorgeous Oriental trappings, the inevitable blue bead fastened to each rein, and a saddle-cloth that might have been cut from the piece of which Joseph's coat of many colors was made.

We started directly after lunch, for the ride to Dog River and back was long. The first few miles lay along the outskirts of Beirût, past adobe and stone huts, through defiles of cactus hedge and waving reeds, down to Beirût River. Then, turning to the left, we rode on the seashore, skirting St. George's Bay (one of the innumerable scenes of the worthy saint's encounter with the dragon). The native horses, being bred on the sands, started, as soon as they felt the sand of the shore under their feet, on a hard

gallop, a sort of informal race which they continued, off and on, for several miles.

A diversion was created, midway in the race, by a train laden with quarry stones passing on the ridge above. The horses, unused to locomotives, shied violently, Massoud taking the bit between his teeth and bolting for the sea. He refused to stop until he was almost breast high in the surf. Then, as I succeeded in turning him, he tried to lie down and roll. I managed at length to bring him back to land, and, soaked through with salt water, started to overtake the others, whose horses had scattered in every direction. It was an invigorating gallop along the beach, the sea-wind strong in our faces, and the waves breaking white about the horses' feet. Leaving the shore, we went up a narrow road, lined on either side with a sort of pampas-grass, toward Dog River.

We were forced in this road to ride two and two, and here I fell from grace by my first attempt at Arabic. David had told me that the Arabic word corresponding to our "get up," or "hurry," was *iella* (I spell phonetically), and that the native horses understood that term better than any other. Accordingly when Massoud fell back I used this word with the desired effect. My companion promptly informed me that I had been indulging in colloquial Arabic profanity, and seemed a little shocked. I was somewhat chagrined, but, in a country where people hiss at a horse to make him stop, and call on the name of the Deity to start him once more, a stranger is prone to mistakes.

When I spoke of it afterward to David, he seemed surprised to hear that foreigners regarded the term as

profane. And, indeed, when I had heard a few samples of genuine Arab profanity, — the most expressive and comprehensive in the world, — *iella* seemed to be quite mild.

Half-an-hour's ride from the shore brought us to Dog River. This stream runs into the sea, and at the outlet two black rocks rise above the surface. These are supposed to resemble dogs' heads, and natives declare that they bark and howl on stormy nights. A hillside rises precipitously from the road, a few paths and ledges giving doubtful foothold. Narcissus and cyclamen in full bloom, in spite of the season, grew in the greatest profusion, half covering the rocks, and at the hill's base were squills and blossoms of all sorts.

We dismounted and tied our horses; then began the ascent. A few minutes' climb brought us to a wider path that twisted up the rocky hill to the pass above. This path proved to be an old Roman road, and just above was another track, much older, and less easily traced. This second road was built, either by Egyptians or Assyrians, thousands of years before Christ. Here was the sole entrance, through the Lebanon range, from Northern to Southern Syria. Nowhere else was it possible for an army to pass. The road is paved with bedrock of limestone, is steep, irregular and tortuous, with many pitfalls, and in many places is less than ten feet wide. It must, at best, have formed a dangerous and inconvenient passage-way for a large body of men.

Yet over it have marched the armies of all ages; from the fierce-eyed, half-naked hordes of barbarians who in earliest times swarmed down from the north

to plunder the richer lands south of Lebanon, down through Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian, and Roman, to the modern soldiers of "Napoleon The Little," sent to protect the Christians during the massacre in 1860.

Along this nearly effaced road are the Pictured Rocks, slabs smoothed on boulders and cliffs, and decorated with bas-reliefs of the various invaders who passed that way.

The slab nearest the main road represents Esarhaddon the Assyrian who came down from the Euphrates to crush a revolt against Nineveh, and, returning conqueror, caused a likeness of himself, in royal vestments, to be engraved on the rock. Beneath it is a hieroglyphic list of his achievements. Beside this, and of earlier date, is an effigy of Rameses II., who wished to perpetuate in stone his victory over the Hittites. Esarhaddon doubtless caused his own tablet to be carved next to that of Rameses, as an ironical reminder that the great power of Egypt had, ere then, succumbed to Nineveh.

Passing on from these, we came to a bas-relief of Sennacherib, representing him as standing adorned with his tiara and scepter, overlooking Syria. This was graven when Sennacherib led down his purple-and-gold cohorts, —

"Like the wolf on the fold,"

sure of easy victory.

Esarhaddon's irony in carving his tablet by that of Rameses is weak compared with the picture that rises in the mind of every one who sees the effigy: the picture of the regal bas-relief, emblematic of victory, looking down a few days later on Sennacherib, when, beaten and

overthrown, he fled back over this same pass, accompanied by his handful of unkilled followers.

"I wonder if he thought to look at his own likeness on the rock when he retreated over this road?" queried a young doctor from the College. "I always thought it was a bit unfair that he should have had such a hard time. He only tried to do what many conquerors had done before him."

"Esarhaddon, his son, avenged the defeat years later," remarked one of the ladies.

"Yes," answered the doctor, "but it didn't do him much good. For, in the meantime, his two other sons, in a spasm of filial piety, had murdered the old man."

Several tablets, more or less distinct, follow these. Among them is the effigy of Sultan Assurnazirpal, who had conquered Syria; and who, we read, "caused his image to be erected over against the Great Sea, offering sacrifices and libations to his gods for the favor shown him." The last inscription of all, said to be the oldest, dated from the early days of Rameses II., before the birth of Moses, and represented Rameses making votive offerings before an altar. This picture is no longer visible, having been effaced during the second empire, and replaced by a white and yellow stucco tablet, on which are proclaimed the military glories of Napoleon the Third, — fit climax, or anti-climax, for the list of heroes preceding it. Each of the Pictured Rocks was formerly protected from time and weather by double metal doors; traces of which, in the form of sockets for hinges, and rust marks, still remain.

The doors themselves were long since removed; and the unprotected effigies, growing yearly dimmer from

exposure to the outer air, must soon become as much things of the past as the worthies whose deeds they commemorate.

I returned from the ride in time for dinner, and spent the evening packing. The diligence leaves Beirût each morning at four, and our places had been booked for the next day.

At three in the morning David awoke me, and said that breakfast was ready. Early rising is seldom pleasant, and breakfast at three on a winter morning offers few charms. When I went to the dining-room, I found the cook and a waiter of the "Orient" who had sat up all night that they might be in time with my breakfast. They had beguiled the time with a card game. The waiter evidently had lost, for he was subdued and plaintive, and glanced reproachfully at me as the indirect cause of his misfortune, while the usually somber cook actually beamed.

Breakfast was hastily swallowed, and we set off for the diligence station. Early as it was, the station-yard was already crowded with employés, passengers, merchants, and loafers. Speaking of this last-named class, it is evidently an Oriental refinement of laziness that makes a man get up at three o'clock in the morning to loaf. These loungers had no part in the work, but simply came to sit on boxes and sacks and watch the preparations for the trip.

The winter night was pitch dark, and the few lanterns served to heighten the gloom. Two or three soldiers stood in the gateway, growling out orders, their swords clanking impatiently against the stone pavement; a little group of women huddled in one corner,

waited to be lifted into the second-class compartment; servants tossed bulky packages to the coach's top; a Franciscan monk, at one side of the courtyard, mumbled orisons over a string of olive beads; while the driver, a huge, clean-shaven fellow in European dress, high boots, and *kafieh* (the Arab head and shoulder covering) received parting instructions from the station-master.

At a signal we took our seats. The first-class compartment consisted of three seats in the front part of the diligence. My fellow-passengers were Syrians and knew no language but their own; so I was left in peace to enjoy the trip.

The first two hours were spent in winding up toward the summit of Lebanon. We reached the highest peak as day broke, and stopped to change horses. The air was very cold and bracing. Far off lay the Mediterranean, the rising sun striking white sails here and there on the blue water. The hillside of Beirût, with its white walls, red roofs, and green trees, was bathed in amber mist, and the twisting yellow road behind us looked like a great snake stretching from mountain to sea. Below, in the hollows, it was still night; and lights gleamed here and there, from cottage windows. A flock of sheep and black, long-eared goats passed us, driven toward their pasture-ground by a shepherd with a gun slung over his shoulder.

The station at which we had stopped was a long stone building, where the station-master, his servants, wife, children, live stock, and relay horses lodged. We got out to stretch our legs, and a traveling vender sold us cups of hot Turkish coffee and flat loaves of native

bread. Five minutes passed in changing horses, and we started once more.

The diligence road is owned by a French company, and is kept in perfect repair. Every hour the horses are changed, making fourteen relays between Beirût and Damascus. Six horses (probably imported from France, as they are larger than any others I saw in Syria) form each relay and gallop most of the distance.

Some hours were spent in crossing the Lebanon range; then we crossed a wide plain, and climbed the Anti-Lebanon. The engineers who planned this road introduced into it more turns and twistings than any ordinary mortal could have imagined. In climbing one hill, perhaps a mile from base to summit and not very steep, we made six different windings, tacking like a ship sailing against the wind. We must have traveled four miles in climbing that one-mile hill. We went at a uniform speed, whether up hill or down, averaging eight kilometers per hour. Long strings of camels laden with Damascus packages *en route* for the coast, mule trains, armed horsemen, peasants, and venders, passed us. All natives saluted the diligence respectfully as it went by. It is a sort of wonder to their simple minds, this conveyance that can traverse the long road from Beirût to Damascus in fourteen short hours; this diligence which is owned by a great foreign nation, and whose passengers sprinkle them with backsheesh for any trifling service.

We stopped at Stora, a village half-way between Damascus and the Coast, for lunch. David took me to a little hotel, on whose back veranda I ate as civilized a lunch as I could have had in any continental

restaurant. A waitress who spoke broken French praised the merits of each dish, and insisted on my taking a second help of everything, which, after my drive in the sharp morning air, and a ten hours' fast, I was glad enough to do. The Stora wine is famed throughout Syria, and rightly; it has none of the crude sharpness of Lebanon wine, and possesses a peculiar bouquet of its own.

After lunch I sat, with a nargileh, on the veranda, looking out at the view. We had passed, that morning, bare, rocky hills, olive orchards, and woods of dwarf pine. Everything had been in keeping with a foreign land. But here, at the back of the inn, was a birch grove, whose leaves silvered in the wind. Through it ran a little brook, and beyond was a green meadow. A bird was singing somewhere, and there was absolutely nothing Oriental about the scene. It looked more like a bit of American landscape; and for some reason gave me a momentary feeling of homesickness, this home scenery, thousands of leagues away in another world.

I had little time, however, to wax sentimental, and in a few minutes we were off, — *en route*, not for some place in keeping with the Stora scenery, but for Damascus, the oldest and perhaps the most Oriental city extant.

The afternoon sun beat down fiercely, as we rode over the valleys and lower hills, and I became intolerably thirsty. One of my two fellow-travelers offered me a bottle of some greasy liquid, that looked like a mixture of milk and dish-water; but I preferred rather to endure the ills I had than fly to others that I knew

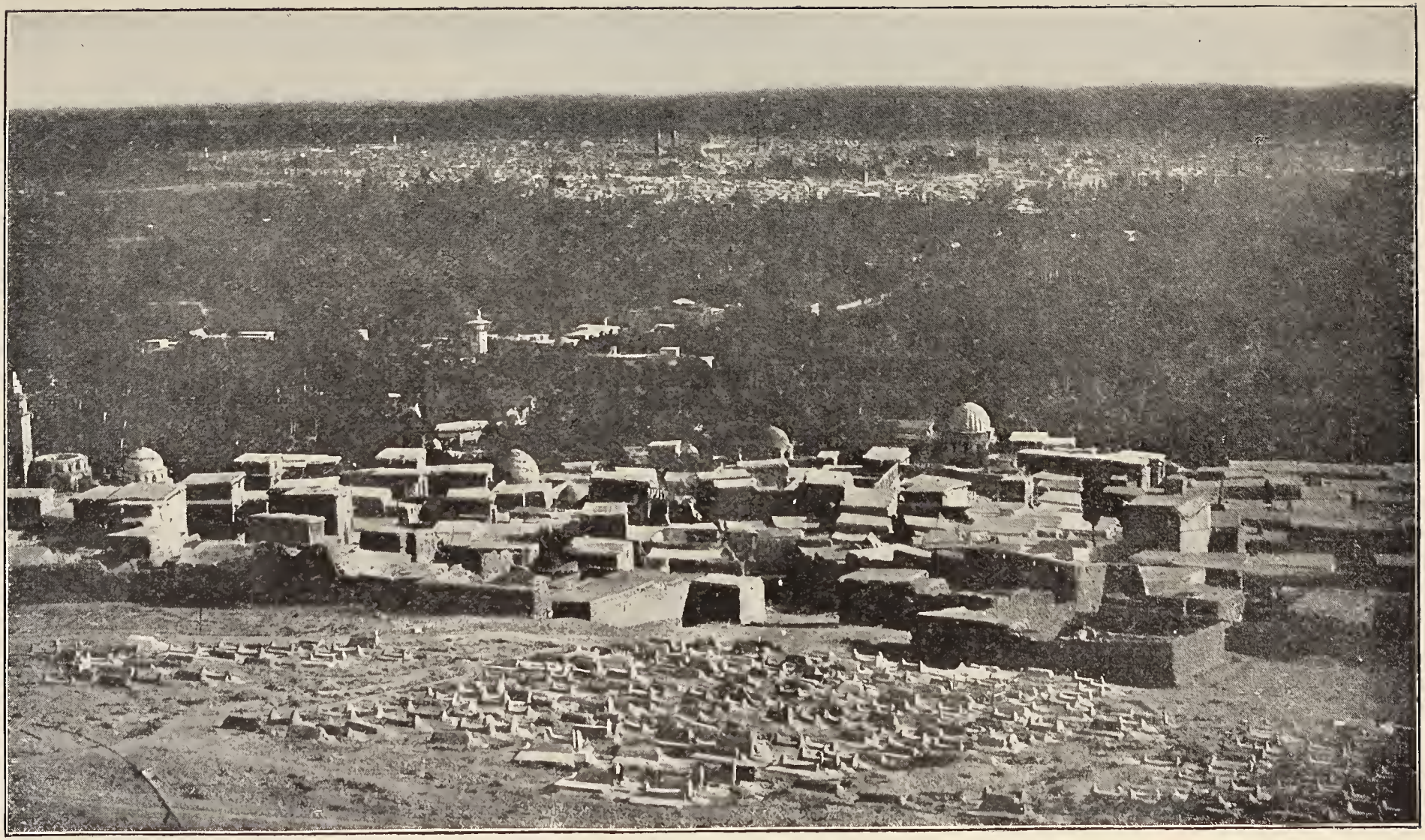
not of, so I declined with thanks. The other Syrian seemed to think a cigarette might quench my thirst, and offered me one. I puffed away at it, and gazed out at the dust-clouds, my tongue becoming more parched each moment, until the next stop. As we drew up, David appeared at the window, — a swarthy angel of rescue, — his hands full of cool, sweet mandarinos.

"I thought perhaps you might be thirsty, sir," he said; "it is rather warm down here."

I could have fallen on his neck for gratitude.

Then and always, during our long acquaintance, he anticipated my every wish, and did all in his power to lighten any inconvenience or fatigue. Late in the afternoon our road ran along a narrow stream, perhaps sixty feet wide. This was the Abana, the "river of Damascus," which the Syrian of old declared "better than all the waters of Israel."

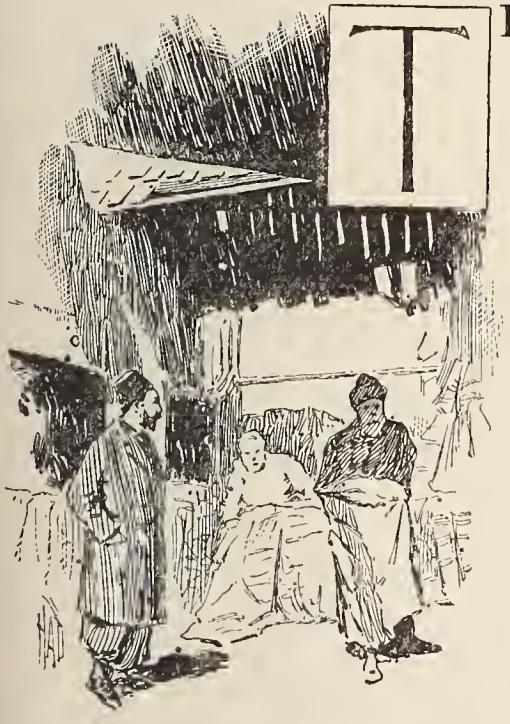
We soon left the river and drove on until dark. About six we entered the city and were met by officials who examined our *tezkeres* and counted our luggage. The examination finished, we crossed to the Hotel Dimitri, where I was to lodge during my stay in Damascus.



DAMASCUS.

CHAPTER IV.

DAMASCUS STREETS AND BAZAARS.



THE next morning we set out to see the city, first driving through it, and afterward making a tour of the bazaars; my more unwelcome task — the visit to the Leper Settlement — being deferred until afternoon.

Damascus is built in the shape of a spoon; the handle formed of densely packed streets and mosques, and the bowl opening into the Medan (literally, "large place"). In this Medan the annual caravan of Mecca pilgrims forms. Here also a lump of sugar is given with great ceremony to the white camel which bears the Prophet's insignia.

The journey to Mecca forms one of the greatest annual events in Damascus. None but Mohammedans may go on it; and none but Mohammedans may enter the Sacred City of Mecca. One Christian, a German professor, succeeded some years ago, by means of his knowledge of Arabic and of religious customs, in joining the pilgrims and making the entire journey unsuspected. This was, of course, done at imminent risk of

his life; but as he was afterward enabled to write a very learned book on the subject,—which few people have read,—he probably felt repaid.

The great Moslem burying-ground of Damascus is in the Medan. Here, bereaved relatives come to wail over the dead; or, in case of other engagements, pay professional mourners to wail. In hot weather tents are put up by the tombs; in which, on comfortable chairs or rugs, the mourners can give their whole attention to weeping, undeterred by outside influences.

Near by is the tomb of a man who murdered Fatima, Mohammed's favorite wife. The Faithful still cast stones at it in passing; accompanying each missile with some comprehensive curse that embraces the murderer, his ancestors, and descendants. The tomb has been frequently cleared out, but is at present choked with stones and rubbish.

A broad thoroughfare leads from the Medan to the heart of the city. This street is lined with shops, money-changers' stalls, desks where scribes write letters for the unlearned, and brokers' stands. The roadway is choked with venders' booths and wagons; and near these, tradesmen of all sorts congregate to discuss business or drive bargains. Bedouins and fellaheen from the country come here to raise money on next season's crops; merchants, usurers, and beggars are busy wringing a livelihood from any needy visitor to town; Druses (recognizable by their unembroidered white turbans and blue eyelids) mingle with Jews, whose broad-rimmed hats, long beards, and side-locks make them conspicuous in any crowd. At one corner a tall man with no nose is

selling questionable-looking meat; while stray dogs and cripples fill all interstices in the throng.

After a half-hour's drive we reached the bazaars. A certain quarter of the city is set apart for these, and they have been famous since the time of Christ. They consist of a labyrinth of narrow streets covered with arched wooden roofs, and lined with shops.

These shops are usually nothing more than a single small room, open on the street. Each street is devoted to some particular industry. Thus, one is known as the Saddlers' Street, another the Silversmiths' Street, another the Bootmakers' Street, etc. The average shop is unpretentious, and is presided over by a stolid shopkeeper, who sits, smoking or sleeping, behind his wares. A long road is devoted to cheap prints, dresses, handkerchiefs, cologne bottles with womens' faces stamped on the sides, cheap lace, and ribbons, all imported from France or England, and selling for more on that account. The Silversmiths' Street is short, and separated from the main road by a doorway. It is more like a paved hall than a street. Many silversmiths exhibit their goods here, but few have their workshops on the premises.

This business is almost entirely in the hands of Christians. It is passed on, like many Eastern trades, from father to son, and seldom taught to outsiders. Christians in Damascus have, since the massacre, hesitated to buy land or houses, fearing that such property might be confiscated or its owners killed. Hence their living is usually made by some hereditary trade or profession, which, as they say, no man can steal from them. The Damascene silversmiths are noted throughout the world for their fine work. On their stalls masses of rings, orna-

ments and cups, chains and bracelets, flexible as silk, and jewelry of all sorts are piled in careless profusion. These are, as a rule, sold by weight.

Here and there through the bazaars, Turkish baths are placed. They are large and well kept; marbles of all colors covering floor, walls, and ceilings. Neither space nor expense has been spared, and in decoration and appointments they fulfil our Western ideal of Oriental magnificence.

Other streets, short and detached, like the Silversmiths', but more dimly lighted, are filled with antique Persian rugs, whose imperfections are hidden by the half-light. The heavy odor of gums and spices in these dim rooms reminds one of the fabled scents of "Araby the Blest." In other streets the bazaars are two stories high; the upper floors are used more as storerooms than as shops.

The second-hand goods quarter is one of the most interesting. Here wares of all sorts and descriptions, from sword-canes to shoe-laces, are sold; some in the last stages of uselessness; some, comparatively new.

If the maxim "*Caveat Emptor*" ever applies, it applies in Damascus; the average tourist being fair game for the bazaar shopkeeper. How men could have the folly or the nerve to look calmly in a tourist's face and demand for some piece of merchandise five hundred per cent more than it is worth, and two hundred per cent more than they know they will receive, was always a mystery to me, until, some time later, in Jerusalem I heard an American say: —

"I always give these fellows what they ask. It's cheaper in the end than bargaining with them."

We Americans raise the price of everything, both in Europe and the East. Our proverb, "A fool and his money are soon parted," is also in vogue in the Orient. Only, the Easterners make an unimportant verbal change: "An American and his money are soon parted," "Traveling American" and "fool" being synonymous terms in their minds. Indeed, after watching the wild antics of some of my fellow-countrymen in foreign lands, especially in money-matters, I fear the Aryan is not often wrong in his idea. We call them cheats; but when a rich foreigner enters a bazaar, with royal contempt of expense graven on every inch of his frame, we can scarcely blame merchants for taking advantage of him. Wealthy Americans are of course justified in spending their money as they choose, but it is a little hard on poorer men who come after them.

I had read several accounts of the Damascene bazaars, one or two of which had spoken of their gloom and dirt. I did not notice these defects myself. After the glare of the Syrian sun, it was pleasant to walk through their shaded streets, where sunlight only entered from small windows and crevices in the roof. The cool gloom, broken here and there by these bars of light, was decidedly refreshing.

The bazaar streets themselves are constantly filled by people in every style and color of dress. Women are plentiful; Jews and Christians leaving the face bare, while the wives of Mohammedans wear veils. Sometimes, when a Moslem woman wishes to separate from her husband, she goes about the bazaars unveiled, hoping that she may be seen by some of his friends, who will report to him this shameless procedure, and thus may

lead him to divorce her. The divorce among Mohammedans is a simple matter. Three short sentences from the husband, on any pretext whatever, divorce his wife as completely as any court in the land.

Some husbands will not let their wives shop at the bazaars, but send servants who bring home samples from which the luckless wife may choose her dresses. The streets are thronged, and each bargain takes an interminable time. The shopkeeper is never anxious to wait on his customer, but sits passively and lets him choose for himself. It is only when a price is discussed that he comes out strongly.

Donkeys, and even camels, are driven through these narrow streets (from twenty to twenty-five feet from side to side), a boy running ahead to force a passage through the crowd.

We stopped to look at a ruined gateway leading out of one of the bazaars. This was arched over by a monolith, finely carved, and of Phœnician architecture. It has probably hung there for three thousand years. The supports have grown somewhat feeble, and it is not unlikely that some fine day the street beneath it will be enriched by a piece of beautifully carved stone, and impoverished by the loss of several shopkeepers.

As we were looking at it, the man who kept the shop just in front spoke to Ayoub (my guide through Damascus). The two talked for a moment and then, turning to me, Ayoub said: —

"He asked what we were looking at, and when I pointed it out to him, he said his shop had been in front of that for twenty years, and never before now had he seen or even heard of it."

We passed on, and stopped to look at the ruins of the Great Mosque which had been burned two months before. This was the largest and most richly furnished of all the hundred and twenty mosques in Damascus. Several theories concerning the cause of its destruction are current. The Mohammedans say it was because Christian laborers were employed on it, and Heaven in anger at such sacrilege destroyed it by fire. The Christians say it was lighted by burning solder which the workmen were too lazy to put out. Others say lightning struck it. In any case, it is destroyed; and every day crowds of men volunteer their services gratis to help rebuild it. The Sultan himself has given a large sum toward the cause.

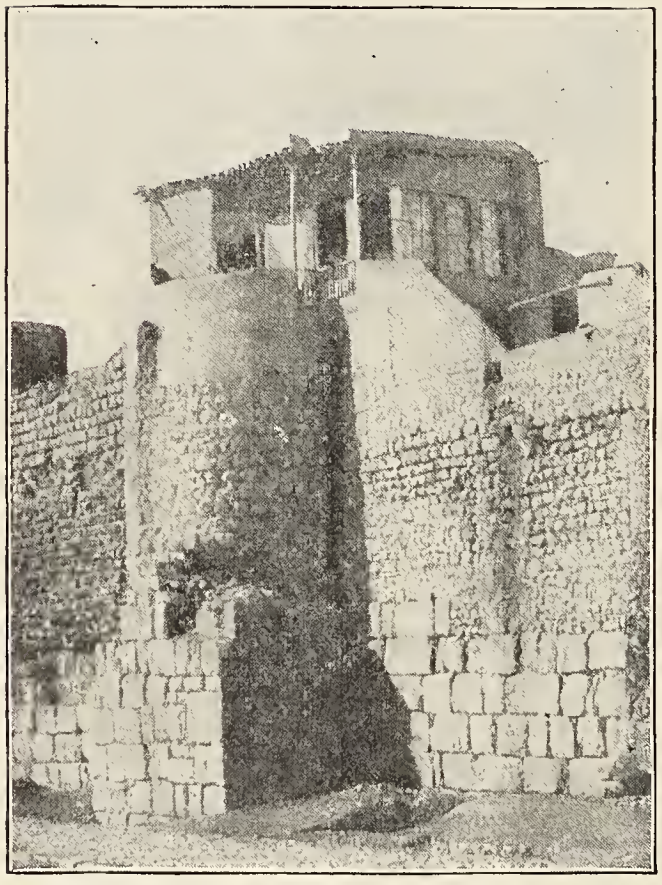
Leaving the bazaars, we came into a street that reaches to the eastern gate of the city. This street is lined with workshops and emporiums, where the bazaar goods are made and kept. Weavers, mother-of-pearl carvers, makers of inlaid work, shoemakers, and saddlers, all have their storing and manufacturing rooms here. Above are latticed bay windows, whence women's faces look down on the passers-by.

"This is the street that is called Straight, mentioned in the Bible," said Ayoub, as we passed through it. "It is one of the oldest streets in the world."

We came to the eastern gate of the city, and drove out into the open country. Damascus is surrounded by trees, walled gardens, orchards, and vineyards. Hills slope down toward it, and the river Abana flows through its center. It is well named the "Pearl of the East," for no other Eastern city can boast such surroundings and natural advantages. To the north, a day's

journey away, plainly visible from the high ground about the city, lies a strip of yellow sand, stretching as far as the eye can reach. This is the Great Syrian Desert, beyond which lies Persia.

As we left the city, Ayoub pointed to a portion of the wall, near the gate.



City Wall — where St. Paul was let down.

"That is the place," he said, "where St. Paul is believed to have been let down, when he escaped from Damascus. It is not certain, but it is generally believed."

Half a mile beyond, in an open space, was a caravan of nearly a hundred camels. These had crossed the desert from Bagdad, laden with goods for Damascus. Caravan camels, being desert-bred, are afraid of the town sights and noises; so this space without the walls is set apart for them while their freight is carried into the city.

The journey by caravan from Bagdad to Damascus takes thirty-five days. The mail is carried by a trained dromedary, who makes the distance in ten days. It is a long and perilous trip, and the rider who guides the mail-dromedary is looked on as a hero. To an ignorant

outsider, however, he seems merely a gorilla-like negro who would be much benefited by a bath.

We turned back after inspecting the caravan, and reached the hotel in time for lunch. Ayoub told me on

"A Gorilla-like Negro."

the way that, if agreeable to me, we would visit the Leper Settlement as soon as lunch was over. It was better, he said, to go there directly after eating.

CHAPTER V.

NAAMAN HOUSE OF LEPERS, DAMASCUS.

THE leprosy of to-day is not that mentioned in the Old Testament. The ancient form of leprosy is now only found among dumb animals. A Scotch doctor described the present form to me as "a mixture of chilblains, itch, and mortification," which is as good a definition as I know. It is not believed to be contagious, unless one is brought into close and constant association with lepers; but is usually hereditary, often skipping several generations and then appearing in some unexpected quarter. Some physicians claim that it is caused by unwholesome and dirty surroundings; but it is generally believed to rise from some prenatal taint. It is slowly dying out in Syria, and is not seen there in as violent forms as in Japan and China. But for the fact that lepers are allowed to intermarry, the disease would doubtless have become already a thing of the past.

It is first felt when the victim reaches the transition stage (at from twelve to fifteen years) between child-

hood and youth, continuing more or less rapidly to eat away the body, until some vital point is touched. Thus lepers may often live to middle age. The final outcome, however, is always the same. No patient was ever known to recover. Sometimes the extremities are attacked first, the disease taking the form of chilblains; in such cases, years may pass before the vitals are reached. Again, the spine or heart becomes affected, causing almost instant death. Whenever the disease is found, its subject is immediately ostracized, and is henceforth forbidden to enter the city walls, or to mingle with former associates.

No provision for these unfortunates is made by the government, their support depending on the charity of outsiders. Sometimes a wealthy man dies, and leaves a fortune or an orchard to be devoted to the use of lepers, for the repose of his soul. Men in less advanced stages of the disease are employed in the surrounding gardens and vineyards, and are allowed — a disgrace to the city where they live — to bake the dough kneaded at their own hovels in the public ovens.

Near Jerusalem a leper hospital has been founded. Here, by the payment of a ridiculously small sum, lepers are maintained and their lives made as easy as possible. Few, however, take advantage of this. Knowing they can hope for no final cure, and hating the system of cleanliness and diet enforced in such an institution, they prefer to live by begging.

The Naaman House of Lepers at Damascus is not a public institution, but is merely a place where Moslem lepers are allowed to lodge, being forced to live by individual charities.

These facts I had learned before I visited the Naaman House, and I did not look forward to my afternoon jaunt with much pleasure. We started directly after lunch, passed through the "Street that is called Straight"; out of the eastern gate; along an ill-kept road with an orchard wall on one side and on the other a ditch where lay the skeleton of a camel, and

THE STREET THAT IS CALLED STRAIGHT.

where two or three yellow stray dogs prowled about in search of some fresher carrion; on to a collection of stone and plaster huts, surrounded by a yellow mud wall. The entrance to this clump of huts is a dilapidated gateway from which the gates have long since fallen.

Leaving the carriage, Ayoub led me through a short courtyard to a passageway between two huts,

whence we came out into a small enclosure. Here was the Naaman House of Lepers. It is not a single house, but a collection of squalid huts, one story high; most of them windowless; each with a single wooden door. These are unfurnished, save for ragged mats that serve as beds. The floors are covered with dirt and bits of rotten vegetables, meat, and bread left from the inmates' meals. The odor inside of the huts is foul beyond description. They face an uneven paved court about thirty-five feet square. At one end of this court, opposite the entrance passageway, is a small wooden house with a thatched roof and a veranda. In this house lives the head of the lepers, — once a well-known man, but now old and confined to his bed. He lies in the one room the house boasts and rules over his fellow-sufferers. Filthy and repulsive to look at, he yet passes an easy enough life, his only worries being the occasional visits of foreign doctors, who insist on examining him and asking questions. His daughter and another woman (both lepers) live with him.

On the ground of the yard, in the doorways, or huddled in the sunlight against the walls, crouched, that afternoon, a number of people, all in different stages of leprosy. Here were Damascenes wrapped in donated clothes that, here and there, bore traces of past finery; Bedouins from the desert (sent here as soon as their disease broke out) still wearing kafiehs and abiehs, now soiled and ragged; while wretched-looking nondescripts, in the last and most loathsome stages of the malady, lay swathed almost to the eyes, on the broken pavement.

As we entered, most of them were lounging about the

court in silence, but one or two talked in a dilatory way. Their voices were weak, rasping, and hoarse, sounding like an exaggerated imitation of a far-gone consumptive's voice, mingled with a certain unpleasant harshness such as few consumptives have. They spoke rapidly, as if trying to finish a sentence before they should be overtaken by a coughing-spell. In fact, their words were broken by coughs, and now and then one would be seized by a paroxysm of weak coughing, and would move away, trailing blots of dark blood as he went.

The daughter of the head-man was at work on the veranda, and seeing us, called out in a shrill voice, in which a peculiar break was apparent, showing the disease had begun its work on her lungs, asking what we wanted. Ayoub replied that I was a foreign *hakim* (or physician) come to help them. She laughed mirthlessly, and said no one could help them but God Himself, and that His kindness did not extend to unclean lepers.

"Do you wish to see anything more, sir?" asked Ayoub.

"Yes," I answered, "I want to interview one of them if I can. There! That big fellow with the Bedouin dress, for instance."

Ayoub called the man, showing him some money; and the leper arose painfully and shuffled towards us. The lepers' motions cannot be dignified by the name of a walk; they merely shuffle over the ground stiffly and awkwardly, with somewhat of the motion seen in old-fashioned sack races.

The woman on the veranda screamed to him not to speak to us; and through all the rest of our stay never

ceased to scream out curses at him for coming to us, curses at the other lepers for allowing us to stay, and curses at us — including in these all our ancestors and possible descendants — for our intrusion. Occasionally, a feebler but more rasping voice came from the room where the head-man lay. The other lepers eyed us most unfavorably, some of them slouching out of sight around corners, and others covering their faces.

The man we had called up stood sullenly before us; nothing but the hope of unlimited backsheesh inducing him to answer our questions. He was about forty years old, and, except for pain-distorted features and twisted fingers, looked fairly sound. His voice was like that of all the others. I give here a free translation of the interview. We asked how long he had been a leper, and he answered: —

"Ever since I was fourteen."

"Do most people get the disease at that age?"

"They feel it first about that time."

"Do you suffer much?"

"Only in cold weather. Then the cold stings our sores, and we are in agony."

"What do you do all day?"

"We sit in the sun."

"Do you work?"

"No; why should I? I am fed. I am clothed."

"You are content then?"

"I am not unhappy. My life is easy, except in cold weather."

"How long do lepers generally live?"

"I do not know. As Allah wills. The head-man is over fifty."

"How many of you are there here?"

"Twenty-eight now. There used to be forty-one."

"What do you do for amusement?"

The fellow looked puzzled; the word "amusement" was evidently unknown in his vocabulary. The others by this time had begun to mutter hoarsely, and looked threateningly at us. The woman on the veranda continued her volley of shrill curses, the head-man's voice filling up all pauses in a growling undertone. The interviewed man, either fearing his companions' anger when we should be gone, or growing impatient at my long catechism, grew angry and refused to say more.

Ayoub gave him a mejidie (eighty-five cents), and we left, the virago's voice following us to the carriage and far down the road.

CHAPTER VI.

HOUSE OF RICH DAMASCENE JEW — DAMASCUS MASSACRE.

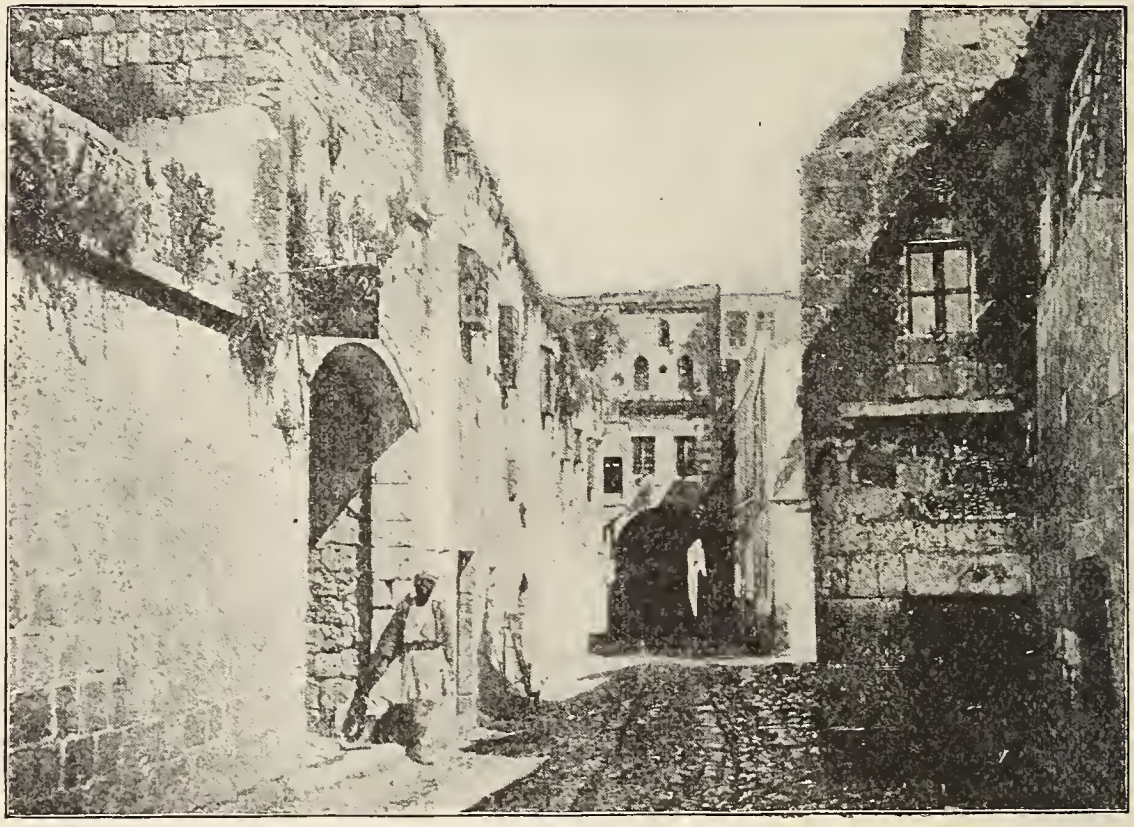
FROM the outside it looked like a dozen other houses in the narrow, winding street; the front having a dingy, ill-kept air. We knocked at the low door, and were admitted by a gorgeously liveried porter, who ushered us into a small, dark corridor. Opening on this corridor were several little rooms, with the usual sleeping-mat on the floor. These rooms were used as sleeping-places for servants and for such messengers from a distance as were obliged to stay in town all night.

It was doubtless in some such lodging that the Hittite captain lay, when, recalled from the field, he foolishly "slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house;" an act of fidelity that cost him his life.

Crossing the corridor, we came into the court around which the house was built. Here for the first time (except at Turkish baths) I saw the fabled Oriental magnificence. The court in which we found ourselves

was paved with white marble and surrounded by walls of black and white stone. A fountain, shaded by blossoming orange trees, played in the center, the breeze throwing a silvery spray half-way across the marble pavement. The orange blossoms were fragrant, and an atmosphere of drowsy coolness filled the whole place.

Beside the fountain stood a tall, dark-eyed slave-girl,



House of Rich Jew.

with a Greek or Circassian face, dressed in a long robe of some clinging, white material, her sandaled feet half-hidden by its folds. She held a tray on which were glasses and a decanter of mastic (a colorless Syrian drink, like anisette); and on the ground beside her were two nargilehs. I had scarcely seen her when the master of the house came forward to greet us. He was one of the richest men in Damascus, and a Jew. I shall

call him "Ismaïl." His real name is too well known in Syria to mention here.

Catching sight of the camera my guide held, he struck an attitude and, throwing one corner of his robe over his shoulder, said in broken English: —

"Monsieur wishes to take me the picture?"

The camera was empty, but I went through the motions of taking a snap-shot; and then explained to him the working of the machine; delighting him with inverted views of his own courtyard.

I had been expected, the mastic and nargilehs having been prepared beforehand. My host, after examining the camera, led the way to his "winter parlor," as he called it. The floor of this was of black-and-white marble. From the door and running to the opposite wall, was a space about five feet wide, where the floor was on a level with the outside court and doorway. This space was unfurnished, and it is here guests take off their shoes. As a foreigner, I was luckily exempt from this custom.

A platform three feet high formed the flooring of the rest of the room. This platform, a room by itself, was heavily carpeted in soft rugs, and furnished (shades of Mohammed!) with a regulation "parlor set" of pale blue silk upholstered furniture, evidently imported from Paris or London. About the wall, however, ran a low Eastern divan, which partially atoned for the glaring chairs and sofa. The walls had a groundwork of colored marble, but were paneled with inlaid mother-of-pearl and ivory. A heavy chandelier hung from one end of the carved ceiling, and long mirrors stood everywhere.

In a corner at the back of the room was a bookcase that held a strange conglomeration of volumes: *Mille-et-Une-Nuits;* Arabic tomes; English and French works; but foremost and evidently most used were copies of Rousseau. I believe that I studied Rousseau in college, but I had long since forgotten his teachings. Still I saw here common ground to work on, so, calling my host's attention to the books, I declared they were my favorites, and we were soon deep in a discussion of the theories of the great Jean-Jacques. I found that Ismaïl's English was less than limited, so we chose French as a medium of speech. I quite won his heart by being thoroughly beaten in the argument. Indeed, considering I had not the remotest knowledge of the subject, my defeat is hardly to be wondered at.

My declaration that I was unable to contend against such an *homme des lettres* as he evidently was, completed the conquest; and, charmed with his easy victory over a foreigner, he himself proposed what I had longed to ask, — that he should show me over his house.

Recrossing the court, we came to the "summer parlor," — I use Ismaïl's terms, —which was twice as large as the room we had left, the lower floor being about ten feet wide, with a fountain in the center. Two platforms, one on each side, rose from this, furnished like that in the winter parlor. On a wall shelf stood fragile vases and antique pottery (Ismaïl is a famous collector of such things), and the walls were paneled, like the others we had seen. Directly over the fountain hung a chandelier; thus placed that its light might be reflected by the water.

We visited several other rooms: sleeping-rooms

(these were on the floor above), dining-room, etc. A sort of summer house opened on the court. This was built in on three sides, the fourth being entirely open to the air. The walls were formed of three large mirrors, the floor was mosaic, the ceiling frescoed and inlaid; a low stone bench covered with carved figures served as a divan.

Next to this was the synagogue. Most wealthy Jews have a private synagogue, and a rabbi who officiates there at stated times. This synagogue was the most plainly furnished room in the house. The furniture consisted of a few wooden benches and a reading-desk. On the walls hung two cheap, uncolored French prints: one representing Ishmael and Hagar; the other, Ruth and Naomi. These, except for an oil painting representing Ismaïl in his uniform of foreign ambassador, were the only pictures in the house. Two cupboards were let into the walls and held two religious books; one, a part of the Old Testament, the other the Talmud. These works were written on huge parchment rolls, fastened within gem-studded silver cylinders. One servant is hired merely to guard these cylinders and to keep them in proper order. As the servant is a Jew, he treats the holy rolls with great respect, and, unable to steal any of the gems, guards the cylinders jealously.

The synagogue ended our tour of inspection. We went back to the winter parlor and lounged on the divans, to recuperate from our exertion. When the nargilehs and mastic glasses were refilled, I asked Ismaïl how he passed his days, and if life ever grew monotonous in such surroundings.

"I usually rise at seven," he said; "I pray and read

religious books for an hour. Then I breakfast, and during the morning I attend to whatever business I may have in the city. After that I sleep, read Rousseau, entertain or visit my friends, and pass the day as my fancy directs. Sometimes in the evening I receive; sometimes I go to the houses of others. We are not energetic here."

"You must be a very happy man," I said, as he finished.

I meant it. A quiet, sensuous life; nargilehs and mastic *ad libitum*, consumed among orange-blossoms, with the cool plash of the fountain always sounding; no hurrying, no business troubles, and plenty of sleep — all offer strong attractions to a traveler fresh from the land whose motto is "Man was made to hustle."

But the Jew thought otherwise.

"Happy!" he exclaimed, with a portentous sigh. "Ah, monsieur, it is not at all as it seems."

Then without waiting to be questioned, he plunged into a long recital of his grievances, whose substance seemed to be that he was being ruined because of an unjust debt, and that although he was a British subject, the English government refused to protect him. He asked if I would not write to the government about it when I returned to England, and said he was sure if I wrote often enough, — half as often as he had written, — the matter would be taken up; he would receive justice; he would be my debtor forever, etc.

When, at last, we had bowed ourselves out of the courtyard and bidden farewell to the dissatisfied lord of the mansion, I asked Ayoub how much truth there was in the tale of woe I had just heard.

"No truth at all," was his response. "Old Ismaïl owed the money to our government and didn't want to pay it, so he appealed to England for redress, and at the same time tried secretly to compromise with the Sultan's agent, playing one nation off against the other. But both nations found out the scheme, and refused to help him; so now he will be sold out,—what you call ruined. It is but right, for our government has been most just and merciful toward him. It is his own fault. Now, his house and all his furniture must go to pay the debt."

"But what will become of him?" I inquired.

"Of Ismaïl? Oh, he will go to the devil."

I was going to inquire more as to the route our Hebrew friend expected to take on this oft-traveled journey, but Ayoub went on:—

"Ismaïl was one of the men who was made rich by the massacre. You see, Christians and Jews alike lost all their property then. Their houses were burned, their money was stolen. The government was indignant, and, after stopping the pillage, ordered restitution for every one who had been injured or robbed. Now, Ismaïl and a lot of other Jews who had never been rich came forward and swore that they had been robbed of great fortunes; that their fathers and brothers who had been killed in the massacre had also been rich, and they, as heirs, presented claims for all the wealth. Our generous government paid whatever sums were demanded; and in that way many people who had never had money before, suddenly became very rich."

I recalled a number of shrewd Hebraic bargains I had witnessed in the Occident, but could find none that

compared with this fashion of using one's murdered family and friends as a stepping-stone to fortune.

I think I break none of the laws of etiquette existing between guest and host in thus writing of Ismaïl. He admitted me to his house (as he himself said) in order that I might tell others in what style he lived, and in the hope that I might help him publish an unjust claim against his government. And I believe I have granted both wishes.

"Were you in Damascus at the time of the massacre?" I asked Ayoub, as we drove back to the hotel. "I've heard references to it ever since I came to Syria, but I know nothing definite, except that most of the Christians were killed. Had you any friends who suffered by it?"

"My father and both my elder brothers were killed then, besides all my other male relatives," replied Ayoub simply.

"Do *you* remember it?"

"Yes. I was ten years old at the time. No woman or girl was injured; my mother dressed me like a girl, and forbade me to speak. So they passed me by.

"For months beforehand the noblemen here had been sending secret word into the country and the desert, calling on all good Moslems to gather at Damascus to destroy the Christians and Jews. They marked out houses; and all was done so quietly that we suspected nothing until the massacre began. Three men whom my father had once released from prison tried to save our family. For three days they stood before our door, and told their friends we were Mohammedans and not Christians.

"All this time houses were burned, and Christians murdered. Our relatives found out that our house alone

was protected; so they escaped at night, by roofs and secret ways, and came to us for safety, until in our one house there were twenty-six souls.

"When it was rumored about the city that Ayoub and a number of Christians were hiding in the house, a crowd gathered at our door. The three men who protected my father tried to send them away; but some Bedouins from the other side of the Dead Sea, being mad with slaughter, drew their swords and rushed at the house. Then the three men saw they could do no more, so they stood aside, and the crowd poured in, and killed all the men and boys we had with us.

"The son of my uncle lay dying of fever in an upper room, and his mother threw herself on him as the murderers came up the stairs, and caught hold of one of their guns. But they struck her hand so heavily with a hammer that her fingers were smashed, and she let go. Then, before her eyes, they beat her son's brains out with the butt of the gun. Except for her, I have heard that no woman received any hurt."

"Did the Turkish government know of the massacre beforehand?" I asked.

"No; as soon as they heard the news, they put a stop to all pillage and murder, and paid for all the stolen property, more than enough in some cases, like Ismaïl's, and — do you see those trees on the other side of the road?" pointing to a line of great trees whose limbs stretched far over the street. "For weeks the nobles who planned the massacre hung on those trees. I saw them every day, as I passed. That was justice; they deserved it; but," hesitatingly, "it didn't make my father and brothers alive again."

CHAPTER VII.

HORSE MARKET — CALL TO PRAYER — AGAIN IN THE SADDLE.

I BREAKFASTED early the next morning; we were to start across country that afternoon, and the camp equipment had already gone on. I sat in the arched gateway of the hotel, smoking an after-breakfast pipe, and watching the few signs of life in the hot dusty road before me — a stray cur or two asleep in the sun; a passing Bedouin; a group of beggars hugging the shady strip near the hotel wall — when David hurried up to me and said: —

"There is a fight over at the horse market, sir. If you will come quickly, we may be in time to see it."

He handed me my pith helmet as he spoke, and led the way toward the Abana. As we reached the river, we saw a string of camels plodding slowly along on the opposite side, and a woman wringing out clothes under the shade of a discouraged-looking sapling. These were the only signs of life that broke the monotony of the hot Eastern day. Nothing could be less suggestive of a fight.

A few steps brought us to a turn in the road, and

there in front of us was a sight that to my uninitiated eyes looked like Bedlam on a holiday. We stood at the entrance of a large square, about the size of a city block. This was filled with horses, mules, and donkeys, and with all sorts and conditions of men, from the Bedouin who had journeyed from the Land of Moab to sell a stolen horse, to the fat little Damascene shopkeeper, haggling over the price of a mangy donkey.

The square was alive with excitement. The grave, indolent Oriental is rightly spoken of as the perfect type of calmness, but, when roused by anger or bargaining, he far outstrips his Western brother in demonstration. Men rode shouting through the crowd, others caught at the reins, or seized the riders' beards, while here and there small groups were engaged in a deadly wrestle, or screamed curses at each other.

I was delighted.

"This is better than an Irish fair," I called to David, who had been making some inquiries. "It is the best fight I ever saw. How many do you suppose are killed?"

The dragoman looked at me wonderingly.

"Why, the fight was all over before we got here, sir. Both men were arrested by the soldiers."

I stared at him a moment, thinking he was jesting. But the broad smile that always went with his jokes was absent. Turning once more to the howling, seething crowd, I asked: —

"But what are they doing now?"

"Just bargaining for some horses. It is quieter than usual, for they were frightened by the soldiers."

When at last I saw he was in earnest, and it dawned on me that this was merely a peaceful market-day scene

and not a wholesale murder, I asked for some explanation of the mode of bargaining. As I could not grasp the whole idea at once, I picked out separate groups, and David told me what each was doing.

The process of Damascene horse-trading, as nearly as I could gather, is this: on certain days, any man wishing to buy or sell a horse comes to this square. If he is a seller, he employs a broker. The broker mounts the horse for sale, and, riding up and down, shouts the beast's many virtues, ending the catalogue with an offer to sell it at some fabulous price. If no purchaser is found, this harangue falls flat; but if one or more men like the horse's looks, they follow the broker on his ride, and when they hear the price named, set up a howl of mingled execration and astonishment, swearing by all their ancestors, by the beard of the Prophet, by the memory of their fathers, and even by Allah himself, that it is an outrage to ask so exorbitant a price for such a worthless and ill-looking little horse.

To these expostulations the broker shrieks back that they have now the chance of a life-time, and implores them to name some price for themselves, since they are too poor or too stingy to pay the just value. Whereat some member of the party names a sum that may or may not be fair. With a horrified yell, that puts to shame all former efforts (his voice being better trained), the broker calls on the Prophet, the Patriarchs, and any other worthies he can recall, to witness the insult put on him by so meager an offer. The noble beast he has now the bliss of riding is worth four times as much money. Bystanders without a penny

in their purses join in the dispute, one siding with the broker, another with the would-be purchasers.

The number of bargainers, after a long and exciting argument, dwindles down to one, and the broker, dismounting, goes to look up the horse's owner. This worthy has hitherto taken no part in the transaction, saving his forces for after-use. The broker, having found him, announces the price agreed on, and tries to join the hands of buyer and seller by way of sealing the bargain. But this is by no means the easiest part of the trade. The seller evinces surprise, even horror, that so low a sum (which, by the way, is probably more than he commissioned the broker to accept) has been offered. He is at last induced by the broker's prayerful entreaty to accept it, when suddenly the buyer, who has stood passive during the last conversation, declares the broker has lied, and that no such preposterous figure was agreed on. The seller, hearing this, stiffens, and returns to his former high price; whereupon the long-suffering broker, seizing a hand of each, shrieks entreaties at one and threats at the other, mingled with hopes that the Prophet may curse his beard if he cheats either. The men now and then withdraw their hands to show how little they care whether the trade is struck or not; but at last, through sheer fatigue, let them lie quietly in the broker's grasp. Then the sale is made, and in a quiet, matter-of-fact way the chief actor turns his back on them both and looks for some new horse to sell.

The performance I have just described is not a special case. Fifty such scenes are acted at once in the horse market, to say nothing of outside efforts. The

Orientals, for an indolent people, take a great deal of unnecessary trouble. For instance, buyer, seller, and broker know from the first, to within a few shillings, what money a horse will bring, and two minutes' quiet talk would arrange it all. From simple custom, however, one has named a price he knows no one will accept; the other has beaten him down, penny by penny, to the *prix juste*, and an hour or more of precious time has been thrown away. But as time is the very cheapest of Eastern commodities, no one feels the loss, — injured lungs and arms half-shaken from the sockets being, I suppose, minor details.

The silent street was a grateful change from the horse-market babel; and we stepped across to a little open-air *café* built over the river to refresh ourselves with nargilehs and coffee before going to lunch. We sat there until noon; when the muezzins came out on their minarets to call the faithful to prayer. This is a ceremony performed several times a day, and, as far as I could judge, is for the most part disregarded by the faithful. The muezzin comes out on the little gallery of each minaret, like the cuckoo in a Swiss clock, and, with a voice more or less sweet, but always powerful, gives the call to prayer. Heard from a distance, the hundred and twenty voices chanting in unison sounded sweetly enough, but nearer by it was awful. The words to the call are as follows: —

"Allah hu âkbar!
Lâ illâ illâ Allah;
Siadnâh Mohammed Râsoul Allah;
Hâyâh âllâh Il Sâlâh,
Hâyâh âllâh Il Fâllâh!"

Which being interpreted is: —

"God is great.
There is but one God.
Our lord, Mohammed, is his apostle (or prophet).
Come to prayers!
Attend to your devotions!"

Each phrase is repeated twice, in a slow, sing-song fashion; then the whole chant is sung once more, — this time faster and less distinctly.

We were to leave Damascus and civilization at two that afternoon. I had finished lunch and was directing a letter for the next day's steamer from Beirût, when I heard a knock at my door. A gorgeously appareled being entered, and I looked twice before I recognized, under the folds of a purple and gold silk kafieh, David's face. Up to this time he had dressed quietly in the street dress of a Syrian gentleman, but he was now arrayed in full dragoman costume. The kafieh covered his head and shoulders, falling far down his back; a short embroidered jacket of bright blue opened in front to disclose a many-hued silk vest; Turkish trousers, colored like the jacket, and a pair of glistening boots completed his dress. The whole outfit was set off by a yellow leather belt from which hung a revolver and a long saber with a curiously carved old blade.

A foreigner would have looked ridiculous in such a rig, but it sat well on Jamal. I have seldom seen a more picturesque or striking figure than the dragoman's, as he stood, framed in the doorway, waiting for me to get ready.

My own attire was far less brilliant and becoming. I had adopted the silk kafieh, which I have found for all weathers the easiest, most comfortable headdress im-

DAVID JAMAL.

aginable, a flannel hunting-shirt, riding-trousers, and high boots. To these I had added, by David's advice, a pistol belt. Fully equipped, I looked like something

between an Arab and a cowboy — a combination of East and West.

I felt my insignificance by comparison as I followed David's glorified form down the stairway and into the street, where a crowd of loungers was gathered to see us off. The horses awaited us, saddled, the light of coming battle shining in Massoud's big eyes. Ayoub and the hotel proprietor wished me *bon voyage*, then, turning to David, kissed him on both cheeks, the regulation Oriental greeting of farewell between friends. I was sorry to leave the Hotel Dimitri, for they had given me excellent fare and service. Such accommodations are not to be despised in a half-barbarous land.

Our Camp.

CHAPTER VIII.

ACROSS COUNTRY — CAMP LIFE.

WE started on a road that ran along the Abana, and traveled southwest.

This afternoon's ride was the last experience we were to have with regular highways for several weeks. I did not know this, or I should not have grumbled so much at the occasional hollows and boulders that blocked our passage. For, compared to the paths and the so-called roads we were to traverse before reaching Jerusalem, this was a veritable *descensus Averni.*

Plans have been made for building a regular carriage road from Damascus to Jerusalem; but at present, like another much-talked-of thoroughfare, it is paved only with good intentions.

After a few preliminary kicks and sudden turnings, Massoud settled down to regular travel, and I was able to enjoy the ride. We galloped a good part of the way, as we wanted to reach camp by sunset. David and I

rode abreast, and a groom followed, carrying my camera. This groom is worth a few words of description, for he was a type in himself.

Serkeese (accent on the last syllable) was his name. He was about twenty-eight, and unmarried. He had no home, but slept in the stables of his successive employers. In appearance, he was of middle height, with small twinkling eyes and an inquisitive little face, light as a European's and bounded on the north — or top — by a thick fringe of uncombed hair that grew nearly to his eyes; a short scrubby beard covered his lower face. He always reminded me of some South African monkey — genus unknown. Unlike most Syrians, he was restless and nervous, shifting constantly in his saddle, and almost always engaged either in droning a tuneless native song, or emitting a hideous war-whoop to encourage his horse. I became used to him after a time, although at first his scream, sounding through the desert stillness, was a bit startling. He had picked up four foreign words: "bon jour" and "good morning." The exact meaning of these words, except that they were a form of salutation, he did not know; but he was very proud of his linguistic acquirement, and would string together all four words, regardless of the time of day, whenever a foreigner saluted him.

"He is silly in his mind," David once explained to me, "but he makes a good groom, and he is kind to the horses."

On our route that day we passed a pile of stones which marks the traditional burial place of Nimrod, the mighty hunter. The broad plain surrounded by mountains that still teem with game is a fitting resting-place for such

a man — if indeed he sleeps there. Tradition in the Occident is solid fact compared with Oriental traditions that weight each hill, tree, and rock with sacred story.

A little before sunset we neared the village of Katana, where Paul is believed to have seen the great Light. This location is, like Nimrod's grave, traditional, but as

Bedouins near the Grave of Nimrod.

Katana has always been the last stopping-place between Jerusalem and Damascus, and is on the Roman route between the two cities, there may be some truth in the story.

Riding on, we mounted a small hill, and, just beyond us in the valley below, we saw our camp. This consisted of three large tents, and, farther on, a rope stretched along the ground, to which the horses and mules were

tied. Above the central tent fluttered an American flag, and we fired a salute to it as we cantered down the slope. The Turkish flag — white star and crescent on red field — was raised over another tent, in honor of the Sultan and the native government.

The sun was setting as we reached camp. Several men came forward to take our horses, and as I looked around, I noticed a general air of comfort and activity that pervaded the place. Muleteers were busy feeding and littering down their animals; the cook, a stout little Armenian who rejoiced in the picturesquely Oriental name of John, leaned over a brazier, cooking dinner, and Imbarak, the waiter, a slender, solemn being, over six feet four in height, was carrying a tray of coffee and biscuits to a little table that stood beside a canvas lounging-chair at the door of my tent.

After finishing this refreshment, I entered the tent and found my luggage already arranged there. I had had some vague idea, based on former experience in camping among the woods in northern America, that I should have to sleep on a blanket laid over green boughs, with my feet to the fire. But I was quite mistaken. David, as I have said, had reduced the discomforts of camping to a minimum. I found my tent walls lined with Egyptian tapestry, the floor covered with two thicknesses of heavy Persian rugs, and the furniture similar to that in an average hotel room, even down to the looking-glass, in which I saw a decidedly hot and dust-begrimed face.

After bathing and exchanging my riding-suit for something less barbarous, I went out to examine the rest of the camp.

The dining-tent stood nearest to mine, and was similarly lined and carpeted, a lounge, a dining-table, and several chairs of different sizes and patterns completing the furniture. Beyond this was the kitchen tent, where a mysteriously built brazier was presided over by the aforenamed John, who was, by the way, a former pupil of a famous French *chef*. At the back of the tent were mattresses where some of the men were to sleep. I next visited the horses who stood in a long line beside the rope. Most of them were eating quietly; Massoud and a mule, however, were having some sort of a row, and my mount's heels were playing a tattoo against the mule's head and side. When he became tired, his victim began to retaliate. Neither seemed to mind it, and the kicking was not hard, being more playful than vicious.

By the time I had finished my round of inspection, dinner was ready, and another of my camp illusions was dispelled. I had memories of a board nailed between two trees at which I had often partaken of sodden biscuit and half-raw fish, my surroundings seen dimly through clouds of mosquitoes and black flies. That had been in a civilized country, with cities and farm houses near by. What could I expect here in the wilderness? What I expected I do not remember, but what I got was a six-course dinner with very fair wine, the meal beginning with consommé, and ending with black coffee and Damascus bon-bons. This was the last sort of dinner one would look for in the wilds, and shows that even the East has made some advance in the culinary line since the days when Moses and his followers gathered manna, "an omer for every man."

Throughout my journey I had as elaborate a dinner each evening; sometimes being served with a veritable Parisian meal, and sometimes with samples of Oriental cookery. The "red pottage," a soup with lentils, like that for which Esau sold his birthright, was one of our most frequent dishes. This is still a favorite soup among the Easterners. I have eaten it in Bedouin camps, at hotels, and at private houses. The recipe is no doubt unchanged since the days of Jacob.

After dinner I had a sea chair carried outside and lay in it at full length, with a pipe of strong Turkish tobacco between my teeth, looking up at the stars, and giving myself over to the unequaled delight of a lazy smoke after a long day's exercise and a heavy dinner.

The stars are more brilliant in Syria than in lands farther north. One star especially, Arcturus, I think, outshone the rest, and even cast a faint shadow. It reminded me somehow of the Star of Bethlehem.

Across the plain came a succession of short, sharp yelps from a pack of jackals, varied at times by the louder howl of a wolf or the prolonged wailing laugh of hyenas fighting far up among the mountains over the carcase of camel or horse. We always hired men from the villages near which we stopped to guard our camp at night; so there was little fear of a close approach from our savage neighbors.

David, after he had finished dinner, which he ate alone, used to bring a chair out beside me, for an after-dinner talk. I always drew him out and got him to tell me stories. Fine stories they were, too, some of them. Adventures of his youth before the country became so safe for travelers; Bedouin stories, native

superstitions and legends, and histories of the great warriors who once lived in the desert.

Then he would sing in his deep, strong voice, Bedouin love and war songs, translating each verse as he went on. I never tired of listening to him, and of finding there are some things that even a college education and enlightened surroundings cannot teach one. So the evenings wore away, and I heard, as if the story were of some other world, the lives and adventures of men who lived as Nature made them before European customs weakened the power of the East.

Jamal's stories and songs, should I write them down here, without the setting of the Syrian night in the wilderness, the camp-fire's glow on the dark expressive face, and the accompanying rise and fall of the earnest voice, would fall utterly flat; yet they were anything but flat to me at the time.

That first night I turned in early and went to sleep almost immediately. Sleeping in a tent is apt to cause restlessness until one is used to it. This is caused, perhaps, by the different atmosphere, or by the ease with which noises from without are heard. I awoke at midnight and lay listening to the yelping and growling of the jackals and wolves, who had drawn much nearer. A hyena on the hill just above our camp started his horrible laugh, which is a long wail broken by a peculiar catch of the breath that makes it sound like hysterical laughter. The horses were still munching hay or jingling the chains at their feet; through the opening at my tent door I could see the old men who guarded us, huddled together around the smouldering camp fire, wrapped in dark cloaks, and whispering and chuckling

to each other, their long gray beards wagging oddly in the half-light. They looked for all the world like the witches in Macbeth.

I went to sleep in a few moments, and slept until about three o'clock, when I was awakened by something that seemed to brush heavily against the side of the tent near my head; this was followed by a sound as of some one beside me sobbing and sighing. I struck a match, but the tent was empty, except for myself. Looking outside, I saw the guards sleeping beside the dead fire, but no sign of the man or beast who could have brushed my tent. The stars were beginning to pale, and the dawn wind had sprung up. Perhaps this wind had caused the sounds that awoke me. When I went back to my tent, I heard the sobbing sound near me at intervals, but I was too sleepy to notice it long. I have long since given up trying to explain or even to wonder at the unnatural sounds and sensations that belong to a night in the Syrian desert and wilderness. Many things that would, among us, be regarded as unnatural and ghostly occur commonly there, and one becomes used to it all. It is needless to cite the many well-known cases of so-called "supernatural" experiences met with at night in "desert places." They cease to disturb, after the first night or so. When I awoke again, it was in response to the call of Imbarak the mournful, who came to inform me that it was "*six heures et demie*, and breakfast was ready."

CHAPTER IX.

THE "ARYAN BROWN" — MARRIAGE CUSTOMS — THE DRUSES.

AS I went to breakfast, I saw that the kitchen tent was already struck, boxes were corded, and everything in preparation for the day's march. The regular continental *dejeuner* — *œufs au coq*, rolls and coffee — finished, I sat down on the canteen chest, filled my pipe, and watched the work of packing. In this task the true Oriental slowness comes out. A dozen natives made an hour's work of what four active Americans could have done in half the time. David did his best, but there was no hurrying them. By long and tedious experience I had learned not to worry over such things or to try to hasten my dark-skinned brethren's motions. For is not this warning set down in the works of a wise man who understood his subject? —

"It isn't good for the Christian's health
To hustle the Aryan brown;
For the Christian riles and the Aryan smiles,
And it weareth the Christian down.

And the end of that fight is a tombstone white
With the name of the late deceased,
And the epitaph drear, — 'A Fool lies here,
Who tried to hustle the East.' "

We did not wait for the work to be finished. When it was well under way, David left word as to what route we were to take, and gave Imbarak charge over the train; then we went ahead, taking Serkeese with us.

The country through which we rode during the morning was thinly wooded, and, as the sun shone brightly, I began to think the difficulties of such travel had been exaggerated. True, the road had degenerated into the roughest of by-paths, and we had to ford two separate branches of the Pharpar; but the air was cool, the horses were in good spirits, and the novelty of the experience interested me.

At noon the heat became stronger and the breeze died away. We halted on a little hill just above a brook, and pitched our luncheon tent under a clump of trees. This luncheon tent was smaller than the regular tents of our camp, and the Cairene embroidery of its walls was varied by having two American flags worked into it. Below each flag was a motto beginning with "Bismillah." I do not remember the rest, as I only know enough Arabic to make myself thoroughly misunderstood in that language. The meaning of the motto, however, was, "In the name of God let us enjoy life" — a gem of advice worth following. Mottoes and flags were David's own idea.

When traveling in Europe one becomes heartily tired of seeing fellow-Americans make the eagle scream on all occasions, and of hearing them prove the manifest

inferiority of Versailles and Venice, to Jackson Park and the World's Fair lagoon. From Americans of this class no doubt sprang the immortal Chicagoan who, visiting the World's Fair, asked an attendant "where the lagoons slept at night and who fed them?"

After Luncheon.

Here in the East, the sight of the old flag was like a message from home. I have heard other Americans speak of this, and I believe the reason we love to see our flag in far lands is not because the sight stirs up our patriotism or our pride in our country, as a country, but because it brings to us thoughts of home, home and nation being two decidedly different things.

Luncheon consisted of cold chicken, potted meats, sar-

dines, a bottle of Stora wine, bread, butter, and jam, with nuts, figs, and raisins for dessert. David, in setting the table, turned to me and said in a sorrow-laden voice: —

"I'm very sorry, sir, but I'm afraid Imbarak forgot the wine to-day."

The wine of the country, I may say here, must not be confounded with the beverages that go by that name in America. It is, in fact, little stronger than vinegar and water, and often quite as sour. The use of it is made necessary by the wretched state of the tanks and cisterns which are, in many parts of Syria, the only water supply. Even the few wells and springs of so-called living water are, as a rule, unwholesome and likely to cause diseases of various kinds, especially fevers.

I was thirsty, and was about to complain of the carelessness, when I noticed that the dragoman held his left hand behind him, and I saw a bottle neck peeping over his sword hilt. Catching the idea, I feigned deep wrath at the thoughtless Imbarak, saying that now I must go thirsty until night. Then after a long and diligent search, David pretended to find the missing bottle and held it up in triumph, whereat I was much relieved, and he laughed heartily over the joke. The thing was so simple that I laughed with him, and thereafter, bottle-losing was a daily occurrence. Each day Jamal would announce that he had spilled or forgotten the wine; each day I would humor him by the same simulated anger; invariably he would produce the bottle, and we would both laugh at a jest which, to him at least, never lost its pristine charm. The performance was silly enough *per se;* but I thoroughly appreciated the

thought that prompted it. The Aryan is not humorous as a rule; but I could see that David constantly cast about in his mind for something that should amuse me and lighten the monotony of our long days' marches. The wine-losing joke was his favorite, and amid our laughter I could not help feeling there was something almost pathetic in this dignified, courteous Syrian's efforts at entertainment. Yet, taken all in all, he was so far successful that during two months' daily companionship with him I was never once bored, and of no other man living could I say that.

Luncheon over, I gave what was left of the wine to Serkeese, and after half an hour's rest, during which the servants and baggage mules passed us, the luncheon tent was struck, and we moved on.

During our afternoon ride the landscape changed. Trees were fewer, and at last disappeared altogether. Dry weeds, brown earth, and loose stones underfoot, and gray, rocky hillsides about us, took the place of grass and trees. This, with a few exceptions, was the general look of the country we passed through, until we reached Jerusalem. It seemed the very abomination of desolation; the skeleton of a great land of the past, which can have no future. I have seen deserted sections of land in America, but none that looked so absolutely lifeless or dreary as the gray wastes that stretched about me on my ride through Syria. To make matters still less cheerful, the sun hid itself, and the sky took on a sombre grayness that harmonized with the country.

We rode on until nearly six, when, almost under our feet, we saw a village. This was Kefr Hawar. It was built into the side of the hill over which we were riding,

and, as it was of the same color as the stony ground, I did not know of its existence, until, as David pointed, I looked down and saw it beneath us not fifty yards away.

All hillside villages in Syria are alike; made up of gray stone or plaster huts, usually one-storied and one-roomed, with low, flat roofs of almost any convenient material, as stone, mud, or straw thatching, on which play swarms of unwashed, ragged children, and where in sunny weather scavenger dogs sleep.

As we rode through the twisting path that served as main street and sewer for the place, children crawled down by hundreds, or so I thought, to stare at us. I never had seen so many children together before. Each house appeared to own about twenty, nearly all of the same size. They crowded us so closely that I had trouble to keep Massoud from treading on them. I fancied the place must be a great Oriental orphan asylum, but at that time I had had little experience with Syrian villages.

We rode to the town threshing-floor, a flat piece of ground surrounded by a square of stones in the plain about a furlong beyond the last house, and found our tents already pitched. A crowd, largely made up of children, followed us and gathered in a ring about the camp; the children soon came closer, nudging each other and chuckling with delight at so marvelous a spectacle. Now the young of our species are particularly distasteful to me, and I told David so. He, in turn, made a few remarks to some men in the crowd, and the children were forthwith corralled and driven off.

Usually, when we camped near a village the inhabitants showed little interest, seldom visiting us except

as guards or sellers of provisions and curios. We relied largely on the places we passed for food. Chickens are the main meat diet among the peasants, and these, as well as fresh eggs, could be bought anywhere. When the guides and provisions had been chosen, and the curio sellers put to flight, we were, as a rule, left undisturbed. But here the ring of rustics hung about until late in the evening.

As David and I sat over our after-dinner smoke the dragoman said, —

"There are many people here now who live elsewhere. A wedding is held to-night about ten miles away, and to-morrow morning the bride with her escort will pass by here on her way home. People have come in from the neighborhood to see her. It is a common custom among the Mohammedans and Druses."

"This is a Druse village, then?" I asked.

"Yes, sir. They are a strange people, the Druses, and they have a secret religion. Did you ever hear of it?"

I had heard of it, and was much interested in a people that can, under a foreign government, make themselves and their religion respected.

The Druses are easily recognized by certain marks: one, the universal custom of painting the edges of their eyelids dark blue, and another the plain white bands of their turbans. The mysteries of their religion are known only to the older men of the tribes, and never divulged to outsiders. Through the kindness of an American clergyman living in the East, I was enabled to see a rare book that held the main tenets of their creed, and a sort of catechism for priests entering their novitiate.

I gathered from this book the following outline: —

The Druse religion was founded by Boha-ed-Din, who, flying from Egypt in 1021, settled near Hermon, and in a few years made thousands of converts. Boha-ed-Din taught the worship of an apotheosized Caliph named Hakem, and of one Hamzeh of Khorassan as his prophet. The heads of the Druse belief are: —

1st. Unity of God.

2d. Successive incarnations of the Deity.

3d. That Hakem will be the last incarnation.

4th. Incarnations of God's wisdom.

5th. Hakem's wisdom the last of these.

6th. Transmigration of souls.

7th. Obedience to Hamzeh's seven laws, renouncing dogma, and substituting pure morality.

The exact meaning of all the above I do not pretend to know; more than that the belief is akin to, if not identical with, Buddhism.

I will cite one question from their catechism, as a sample: —

"*Question:* What shall you reply if asked who Christ was?

"*Answer:* If asked by a Christian, I shall reply, 'He was a great prophet;' if by a Mohammedan, I shall say, 'An impostor.'

The reverse of this was to be replied if the Prophet Mohammed were discussed. From the catechism they appear to be a species of Oriental Jesuits. Their headquarters are now at Mount Carmel, but villages of them are scattered here and there throughout Syria, and they are found in the larger cities. I even saw one — a Druse woman — in the "Fishmarket" at Cairo.

I led David that night to tell me something of Eastern marriage customs. This is a long and complicated subject, so I will touch lightly on it. When a Mohammedan wishes to marry, he goes, or sends his friends, to the father of the girl he has chosen and asks for her hand; should the father consent, an involved process ensues, in which formal courtesy and ancient custom are curiously blended with Semitic bargaining, and a price is finally agreed upon. The lover pays any sum from twenty napoleons up, according to the girl's beauty or family; then, without other ceremony than a great festivity to which all the relatives of both families are invited, he marries her. During the period of courtship the pair never, unless by chance, see each other. Should they happen to meet in this interval, the bride-elect must cover her face and turn her head aside. To look at or, above all, to address her future husband would be a shameless breach of decorum, which would not only break off the match, but disgrace the girl forever. Certain gifts, varying according to his wealth, are required at set seasons from the lover. Among the native Christians the same laws of bargain, gift-giving, and separation during engagement are in use; but only one wife is allowed, and a religious ceremony is always performed.

Barbarous as the Oriental marriage system may seem, experience has proved it to have many advantages. The one great flaw is that the Moslem men often marry mere children. I myself have seen a nine-year-old wife who had been married a year. In such cases, the groom's mother trains the child-wife to housekeeping, and fits her to be a proper helpmeet for the man she

has married. Great is the mother-in-law among the Syrians, often taking rank even above the husband.

"Does the bride that passes by to-morrow live near here?" I asked David, as we arose to go in.

"No, sir; she lives about twenty miles to the north. She came down to be married, and she goes back with a party of men and women, entering every village on the road that invites them, sometimes stopping only to eat and drink, sometimes staying over night. It is said to bring good fortune to the maidens of the village."

"By 'good fortune,' I suppose you mean they may get a chance to marry some man who has a few wives already, and who will beat or starve them as he likes," I suggested. "And they call that good fortune, do they?"

The dragoman looked puzzled for a moment, then answered: —

"Well — they are *women*, you know, sir."

CHAPTER X.

A SYRIAN WEDDING RECEPTION — A CLOUD-BURST.

NEXT morning, as we were breaking camp, David pointed out a line of people crossing the hills a mile or so away; the villagers, catching sight of them at the same time, thronged from their huts and stood in a group near the threshing-floor. A rough-looking young fellow from the house nearest our camp started off at a run to meet the newcomers.

Down the last hill marched the procession, and I saw it was the same party that David had spoken of the night before. As they came into the plain, I could make out the bride, draped in white, a silk veil over her head, riding a sorrel pony, and the only mounted figure in the troop. Before her six men marched abreast, armed to the teeth; behind was strung out a crowd of men and women, walking in any order they chose, and chanting a wedding song.

Midway across the plain the young villager met them, and seizing the bride's horse by the rein, began to talk and gesticulate.

"He is the son of the sheik of this village," explained

David, "and he is inviting them to stop at his house for rest and breakfast."

"He has made preparations for them, then?"

"I was at his house to buy provisions half an hour ago, and I heard him tell his wife he was going to invite them, and she ran out to borrow food from her neighbors. Among us Syrians, we are bound to give whatever we have of food or money when a friend comes in to borrow in such cases as this. The wife had nothing to do with asking the bride; her part is to get breakfast ready, and to see that the house is in order to receive her husband's guests."

As he spoke, the procession started again, the host leading the bride's horse, the crowd behind breaking into a louder song, leaping, and waving their hands, while the six armed guards fired salutes with their long Arab guns, reloading and firing again as they approached. They fired at the ground in front of them instead of firing into the air. One of the bullets (they did not use blank cartridges) recocheted on a stone and passed unpleasantly near us.

A number of villagers came out to meet the guests, kissing them and swelling the wedding chant. Up the narrow street they went, the ubiquitous children following in crowds.

"What are they going to do now, David?" I asked.

"The men will dance in the courtyard of the house, while in the guest-room the women will try to make the bride perform the bride-dance."

"Can we see it? The bride-dance, I mean."

David was doubtful; none were permitted to see this except close friends of the family or distinguished

guests. I could lay claim to neither of these positions, but I went up to the village, none the less.

In the courtyard of the host's house we found about fifty peasants seated around the rough wall, with a frieze of children at the top. In the center of the yard stood two native musicians playing queer fife-like instruments, which emitted delightfully discordant notes. Four rustics, arm-in-arm, performed an ambling dance before the pipers. These dancers were joined by others, coming bashfully, one at a time, until a complete ring was formed. A queer, awkward dance it was, and these sad-eyed peasants, hopping solemnly about in huge heavy shoes to the awful music of the rural orchestra, were almost too much for my self-control. I sat on a rock covered with two saddlebags, and ingratiated myself with the older men by passing cigarettes among them, meanwhile tossing copper coins at the children on the opposite wall.

David had disappeared, but soon came back with the news that he had been to the inner door of the house and (as I suspect), by the liberal use of backsheesh, had persuaded the inmates that I was a distinguished foreigner who had journeyed many leagues to see this particular bride-dance, and that should they be mean enough to refuse me the sight, their village would become a by-word and a hissing throughout the world. Accordingly I was, as a special favor, to be admitted. Following David's lead, I threaded my way through the courtyard *convives*, up a flight of uneven and dirty stone steps built on the outside of the house, dislodging a few batches of children on each, through a low door, into the largest, and I think only, room the house owned.

At first I could see nothing, for the place was lighted only by the door and one small window, and I was blocking the door. It took some little time to accustom my eyes to the light and to show me that the room was jammed with men and women. That it was close and malodorous almost to suffocation, and that the din of talking or singing voices was deafening, I found on the moment of entering.

I stood at one end of the room beside David, and as I looked, a path opened among the guests, leaving the way clear to the opposite corner. At the other end of the vista stood the bride. She had laid aside her white izzar (outer robe), and the pink veil was thrown back from her face.

"She is very fair, is she not, sir?" whispered David.

From a Syrian point of view, she must indeed have seemed fair. To a foreigner, her eyes were her only good feature. These were large and dark, with the patient, uninquiring look so common to Oriental women, and so well portrayed in Vedder's illustrations of the *Rubayyat*. For the rest, her face was ill-featured and insignificant, the lips dyed a vivid scarlet, and contrasting strongly with her dark face. Around her forehead was a tiara of gold coins, and her long hair fell in two braids down her back. Her dress, of thin gauzy stuff, that showed the figure beneath, was strung with ornaments and coins of all sorts. On her dyed fingers were jeweled rings and about her neck was a chain of silver coins, about the size of a half-dollar, with one larger coin hanging as a pendant from the center. This necklace, technically known as "the pieces of silver," is always the bridegroom's principal gift, and is em-

blematic. The bride must always guard it with the greatest care, for should it be stolen, or should a single piece be lost, she becomes disgraced in the eyes of her husband and neighbors, and can never be restored to favor unless it is found. Thus wives naturally watch over it more jealously than over all their other possessions. The idea dates back from time immemorial. We find mention of it in the Bible, where "the piece of silver" in Christ's parable refers not to some ordinary silver coin, but to a part of this valuable necklace. When the "piece" is lost by a woman, the loser will "sweep the house and seek diligently till she find it. And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying: Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost."

I had plenty of time to take in all details of the bride's appearance, for she was unwilling to dance, and several minutes passed before she could be persuaded. Finally, she was won over, and prepared to dance. Now at last, I thought, I should see one of the dreamy, voluptuous dances I had looked for in vain at Beirût. Here, in the wilds, where customs of to-day are those of twenty centuries ago, a strain of Eastern music would rise and the bride-dance would be performed in all its grace. Well, the bride-dance was performed. At least, I suppose it was a dance. The bride, accompanied by the clapping of many hands, as in an Irish break-down, began to sway her head about in maudlin style, shaking her hands and arms so as to make the many ornaments jingle together, and now and then taking a step or two. This was the entire bride-dance — the dance that David had risked his soul's welfare to enable me to see. By

and by it stopped, and David said I was expected to give the dancer a couple of francs as a wedding present, and told me also that she would probably kiss my hand on receiving it. I am always glad to humor native customs, and even offered to strain a point and kiss the bride myself if necessary; but David was afraid this would not do. So, as she and I stepped from our opposite corners, toward each other, with a ludicrous resemblance to wary prize-fighters, I contented myself with following a point of native etiquette David had once explained to me, and when, after I had given her the money, the bride stooped for the hand-kissing performance, I stepped back, and, according to Syrian custom, we each raised our right hand to our lips. This act was received by the crowd with a murmur of approval, for it seemed I had thus paid, quite without knowing it, a great compliment to the bride by refusing to let her perform an act of inferiority, such as kissing my hand. Incidentally, I felt I had saved my hand from being marked with red dye.

One girl in the audience was so moved that she set up a native and impromptu song in my honor. This, like all laudatory, impromptu songs in Syria, began with an ear-piercing crescendo scream and was followed by several sentences sung, or rather spoken, rapidly in the same key without a pause for breath. The song savored slightly of the style of the late lamented Rabelais, and will hardly bear repetition. I was much pleased by the honor done me, until as the last note died away the singer remarked in the same breath: —

"Backsheesh!"

She spoke the word in a casual, impersonal way,

addressing the window. There was none of the beggar's whine in her voice; the word was merely thrown out *en passant*, to be taken or left as I liked. It is not every one who can have a song improvised in his praise, even by hopes of backsheesh, so I gave her two francs, which she took with an air of great surprise. The atmosphere by this time had become unbearable, so Jamal and I salaamed and left the house.

We rode uphill all the morning and at noon pitched

"HERMON WAS JUST ABOVE US."

the luncheon tent on a bare space along the slopes of Hermon, several thousand feet above the sea. Hermon itself was just above us, rising ten thousand feet from the Mediterranean. Owing to the long dry season, the great mountain's sides were almost free from snow; a white patch here and there alone whitening the brown waste.

Clouds had covered the sky for the past twenty-four hours, and these grew more dense as we rode away after luncheon. David glanced up at them from time to time.

"The winter rains are coming on," he said. "I wonder they have held off so long. When they do come, they will be worse than usual. I wish we could have started a few weeks earlier. We would have had clear weather all the way."

"Where do we stop to-night?"

"Near Mejdel es Shems" (the Village of the Sun), "and" — with unconscious satire — "whenever I pass that way, I am always sure to find rain."

He went on to tell me of a celebrated American clergyman, whose party he had taken across country a year or two before. Rain had overtaken them at Mejdel es Shems, and, as their tents were in danger of blowing down, the entire party was forced to seek shelter in the village. The reverend doctor had no mackintosh, so he was drenched to the skin before he reached the quarters provided for him — a large room, one-half of which was filled with damp onions. He was susceptible to cold, so he called for dry clothes and retired to this agricultural apartment to put them on.

Just as he reached the turning-point in the operation of disrobing and dressing again, he chanced to look up, and saw to his horror the total native population of Mejdel es Shems, gazing at him through the half-open roof with faces expressive of delighted and ingenuous interest. The sight of a howaji — a man who had so many garments and who knew how to put them all on — was something not to be missed.

The holy man shrieked for David, who, it seems, came and stood on the roof, from which point of vantage he divided his time between haranguing the crowd on their

rude curiosity, and shouting apologies through the aperture to the discomfited clergyman.

"Doctor —— was very angry about it," Jamal ended reflectively; then looking at me with some apprehension, he said, —

"The wind comes down that valley very hard, sir, and if a heavy storm comes, the tents can't stand it, and *we* may have to spend a night in the village."

"In the house where the onions are, David?"

"Well, sir, we can move the onions out, and — and I'll stop up that place in the roof, if you wish. But I don't believe it will rain at all, so we need not worry."

As if to belie his words, a torrent of water at that minute came down on us; and before we could don our mackintoshes, we were soaked. Galloping our horses, regardless of the rough ground, we rode through the storm, that soon developed into a regular cloud-burst, and reached camp just before dark.

CHAPTER XI.

RAINY SUNDAY IN CAMP — TO CÆSAREA PHILIPPI.

THE next day was Sunday. I awoke late in the morning, and then wished I had slept longer, for it was still raining hard, and my tent walls, rugs, luggage, and even my clothes, had a cold dampness about them that was anything but pleasant.

There is something peculiarly chilling and penetrating in a Syrian rain. No matter how thickly one may be clad or in what shelter, the dampness strikes through to the bone; as for any rider who is exposed to it, mackintoshes, rubber helmets, hip boots, etc., are only in part a protection. I called for breakfast, and after a few cups of black coffee and a cigarette, life grew more endurable. The rain fell in sheets, the earth was half hidden by puddles, and the gray, treeless hills and valleys looked more desolate than usual; but inside the dining-tent it was dry, or at least as dry as could be expected when streams of water constantly poured off the canvas roof.

From where I sat in the doorway I had a good view of the rest of the camp and of Mejdel es Shems itself

lying on the hillside before us. My own tent was deserted, and the flag hung limp in the rain. A murmur of voices reached me from the kitchen tent, and I saw half a dozen servants grouped under the friendly shelter, while David lay on a rug at the back, cigarette in mouth, enjoying the Sunday rest in true Oriental fashion. Most of the men had gone to the village khan with the horses.

Along the plain straggled a few discouraged cows, and a raven flapped drearily over the hill beyond; other signs of life there were none.

I then turned my attention toward Mejdel es Shems, and wondered in which house the onions had been kept when the American divine had unconsciously given a masculine version of *La Chaste Suzanne au Bain.* The village was larger and somewhat better built than Kefr-Hawar, but I saw a strong enough family likeness between the two to make me pity the party that had been forced to pass the night there. Here, in camp, we were at least clean, and no matter how it rained, we could keep up some sort of cheer. I wrote home that morning, to a friend, of La Chaste Suzanne's imitator, telling the whole story of the clergyman's mishap, and ended by saying how much better off I was, since I could stay in camp.

"But, oh, vain boast! Who can control his fate?"

My self-gratulation brought its own punishment, for after luncheon David came in from an inspection of the tents, and said: —

"I'm very sorry, sir, but the ground is getting so soft that the tent poles will scarcely stand, and if any

sudden wind rises, the whole camp will blow down. I'm afraid we must go to the village to-night. It will not be safe here."

I groaned in spirit, but he seemed so much concerned that I had not the heart to offer objections; so he went to see what plans could be made, promising to make me as comfortable as possible. An hour later a messenger came with a note from him. The note, with a few orthographical changes, read thus: —

"DEAR SIR: I have hired the house of the Sheik of the village. It is the best house in the village, and it has four rooms. I think we can make you very comfortable, as I have sent for the furniture from your own tent.

"Respectfully,

"D. JAMAL.

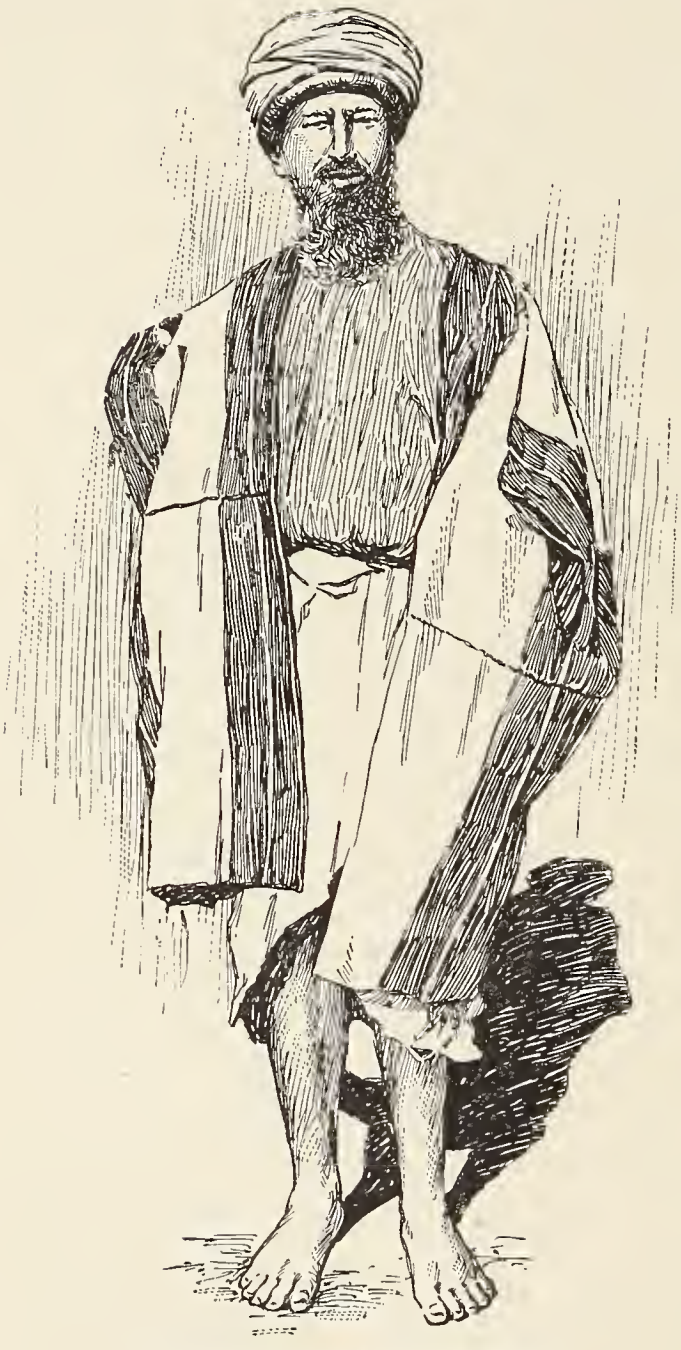
"Postscript: I have made it part of the bargain that the children of the Sheik shall not come near you. There are no onions in this house. D. J."

I saw from this that he had done his best to make the place pleasant, and recognized his thoughtfulness in sending away the children. Following the messenger, I crossed the threshing-floor and the open ground beyond, up the steep hill to the village, where David waited to lead me to the "best house."

This dwelling was all on one floor, and consisted of a large front room, where the dining-table was already set and my lounging-chair drawn up to the window, a back room where the cooking was done, and two small anterooms, one of which held my bed and luggage.

At the front door stood a self-important little man with a long beard. David introduced him as Yusef,

Sheik of Mejdel es Shems. The little dignitary shook hands with me; then, with childlike curiosity, touched the revolver at my belt and asked leave to examine it. I showed it to him, and he produced two great flintlock pistols in return. Afterward he showed me a long, crooked knife he carried. I handed him a little pearl-handled dirk I used as a pocket-knife; after gravely looking it over, trying the point on his thumb, he bowed and said: —



Sheik of the Village.

"*Kater karak!*" (thank you), and placed it in his belt. Before I could speak, David interfered.

"Why don't you return the howaji's dagger, Sheik Yusef?" he asked in Arabic.

"He gave it to me," answered the Sheik.

"He lies!" I said in English. "I handed it to him to look at."

David turned to the Sheik, who still protested that the knife was his, and asked quietly: —

"In what language did the howaji speak when he gave it to you? Did he say, 'Here, take this dagger as a gift from me,' in Arabic? I did not hear him"; (David was too polite to say I did not know enough Arabic to make such a speech correctly, —) "and you, fool that you are, don't understand English. So what language *did* he use?"

This was a poser for our poor little host, and he handed back the dirk ruefully, without another word. David was full of apologies, and after the Sheik left the room, said: —

"You see, sir, these village people are so simple they try to impose on the travelers who are with me, and forget that I shall pass by here again. This Sheik is not like the Sheiks of the Bedouins. The two are quite different. In villages, the petty magistrate is called Sheik. It is a government office and passes from father to son. The fellaheen who live in villages often despise their Sheik. They owe him no loyalty; he is no greater than the rest of them, and they insult him as they like. With the Bedouins it is not so. Among them their Sheik is a prince. He is respected and obeyed by the whole tribe. He leads them in battle and rules them in times of peace."

Imbarak came in at this point to say that dinner was ready, and I ate what I believe was the first civilized meal ever cooked in Mejdel es Shems.

I saw no more of the human members of the Sheik's household that night, and I went to bed early. The dogs of the village howled till daybreak, the men in

the next room snored loudly, and the place was so close that I could not breathe. To make matters utterly unbearable, I found that a large and active remnant of the third plague of Egypt had evidently escaped and taken up their residence in this particular house. Under the circumstances sleep was, of course, impossible; so I dressed, and read until morning. I was no more content when daylight showed me that the wind had not risen, the tents were still standing, and we might have slept in camp as well as not.

We started on our day's journey in a drizzling rain, and rode over the hills until, toward noon, we came to a turn in the path and saw beneath us the plain of Merom. The sun came out and shone weakly for an hour or so. The waters of Merom sparkled in the distance, and beyond the marshy ground that surrounded the lake stretched the great plain where the allied kings "went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people even as the sand that is upon the seashore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many. And when these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom to fight against Israel."

Off to the east lay the valley of Mizpeh, where Joshua drove the beaten host, and where his followers "smote them until they left none remaining."

"It must have been a grand sight from here," I said, as David pointed these places out to me. "What a field for a battle!"

"Joshua was a great general," answered the dragoman; "he could make Jews fight, and fight well; that is more than most generals can do. And Joshua ended well. Jehu and other conquerors did well for a time,

but they usually sinned sooner or later. Now Joshua kept straight, all through."

We seemed to enter a different world; the hills about us were greener, and we rode down toward the plain through natural hedges of myrtle, past olive-trees laden with ripe fruit. It was a grateful sight after barren hillsides and stony ground. I said so to David.

"It is finer still in the spring-time," he replied, "for then the whole plain is a mass of wild flowers. We will reach Cæsarea Philippi, or Baneas, as we call it now, in a few minutes. Then we will be in Palestine itself. Baneas is the northern boundary of the Holy Land. That mountain over there" — pointing to a high, green-clad hill to our left — "is the traditional Mount of Transfiguration. We read that our Lord went up into a mountain from Cæsarea Philippi. That is the nearest and highest mountain. Do you see the Crusader castle on the other hill, — the one to this side?"

I saw the ruined castle less than a mile away. I have heard that it is most interesting to explore, and is one of the largest castles in the East; but we did not turn aside.

Many hills throughout Syria are still capped by such monuments to the grand yet chimerical idea which led the flower of mediæval chivalry to leave home and friends, and die in a useless effort to hold Palestine for Christianity. Though, with our nineteenth century common sense, we see the folly of such an attempt, I think we shall never become educated to so great a height as to forget its noble aims and heroism. After all, the notion was little more chimerical, and far more worthy, than the throwing away of hundreds of lives in the search for a north pole.

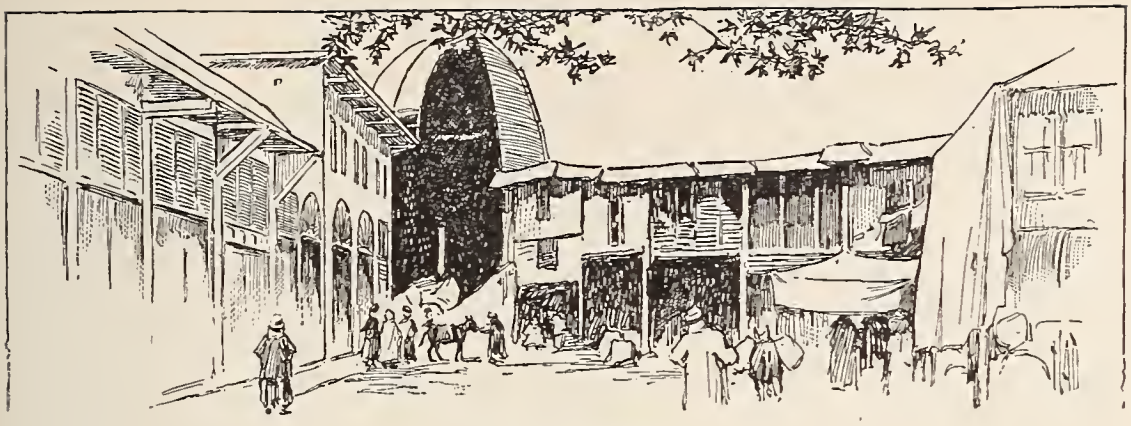
"Our Lord no doubt walked over that plain hundreds of times," David went on; "I always think of it when I look down from here."

On such a day, with this scene before one contrasted with the storm and dreariness of our former rides, it was indeed easy to call up a vision of the Master's white-robed figure passing through the sunlit field of red lilies.

We had reached the bottom of the hill, and came to a ruined causeway with a gate of Roman architecture over it. Rude carvings were still to be seen on the gate, and the bridge looked as strong as when Rome's legions tramped over it. The stream that flowed under the bridge is the main source of the Jordan. To the right lies the modern village of Baneas, and beyond it the ancient village of Pan. The village derives its name from the temple; having first been called Paneas, then corrupted to Baneas. A Herod built the ancient town, naming it, so the story goes, after Tiberius Cæsar and his own brother Philip.

Traces of Pan's temple still remain in the side of the high rock. Niches are there, from which, says tradition, Pan's effigies fell broken, on the night nearly two thousand years ago when throughout the Pagan world rang the cry, "Great Pan is dead!" In this same rock is a deep cavern whence springs one source of the Jordan. We crossed brooks and forced our way through tangled undergrowth to reach this spot, and its wild beauty well repaid our trouble.

After visiting town, ruins, and cavern, we rode over another Roman bridge, a rude flight of slippery steps, and took our way toward Dan, where we were to lunch.



Two-story Khan.

CHAPTER XII.

LUNCHEON AT DAN — SYRIAN KHANS.

THE road to Dan lay through a park-like country whose verdure and warmth made us forget that the time was December and not June.

After a short ride we came to Dan. A little hill, treeless and unattractive, rises abruptly from the surrounding low ground. On this hill, we read, stood the golden calf, placed there by Jeroboam when he proclaimed to the people: "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt! And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan."

The hill to-day is used for grazing ground, and the city's site is occupied only by occasional flocks and shepherds. At the base of the hill runs the Jordan — or rather its tributary. On the banks of this stream, under a great terebinth tree, David prepared my lunch.

He laid the bottle of wine in the river to cool while he set the table; and afterward announced with deep grief that the cork had come out in the water, and all the wine was gone. I recognized this as a new and aquatic form of his time-honored joke, and we went through the regular programme as before.

While I was lunching, the sky once more clouded, and before I finished, the rain began to fall.

A Bedouin girl wrapped in a dark blue cloak, or sheet, the regulation outer garment of Bedouin women, similar in color and shape to that worn by the Madonna of Sassoferrato, came along and stopped to speak with David. She looked haggard and ill, and one of her feet was badly cut.

"She is from the other side of Jordan, three days' journey," reported the dragoman. "Two of her father's camels have strayed, and she was set to look for them. She has traveled three days, but she cannot find them, and she has had nothing to eat to-day. I am going to give her some luncheon."

He got together a few loaves of native bread and some pieces of meat, put them in a paper, and gave them to the girl. She grasped the package eagerly and walked a few steps down-stream, then sat on a stone to eat. Before she could begin, four thin, hungry-looking peasants, who had been watching us, ran to where she sat, and all began talking to her at once.

"They say she asked them for news about the camels, and that now she must share her meal with them," growled David, eyeing the group with strong disgust.

"But there is scarcely enough for her alone," I objected.

"They don't care for that, sir. All they want is something to eat, no matter how they get it."

By this time the food had been portioned out by one of the self-bidden guests, and all fell to eating in a half-starved fashion; the girl first looking at her scanty share sadly, but evidently without any idea of rebelling. When they had finished eating, she looked furtively for any stray crumbs; but her guests had left none. She seemed thoroughly tired out and still hungry, so I carried over a part of a chicken, two eggs, and a glass or so of wine that was left in my bottle, and gave them to her, standing by while she ate and drank. The others crept near and watched the food longingly. One of them even started forward and tried to divide it as before, but thought better of it after the first attempt. I waited until she had devoured everything, then, without listening to the innumerable blessings she invoked on ourselves and our ancestors, we brought the horses down to the stream.

"Cattle often stray off," said David, "and the owner sends one of his servants or his children after them. You remember, Saul met Samuel, and was anointed while he was searching for his father's asses which had strayed."

Mounting, we forded the river, leaving Saul's feminine successor and her fellow-peasants staring after us, and rode on through the rain across the plain of Merom. Riding over muddy ground in a rainstorm is seldom exhilarating; when, added to this, your mackintosh leaks, and your cigarette is too moist to burn, the experience is almost dreary. Serkeese at first tried to enliven things by whooping at his horse, but soon settled

down into a dolorous minor song. I tried to worry Massoud into a bad humor, and for once the horse was too much depressed to answer my challenge. David told one or two stories, but even he seemed subdued, and at last we splashed along in silence.

When we reached camp, we found that the canteen mule had lain down somewhere near Dan, and in a fit of merriment had rolled over on the canteen chest, forcing the whole train to wait an hour while the load was put to rights. In consequence, the tents were not up and would not be for half an hour. We must take refuge in the village khan with the horses until the work was done.

Our camp was in a field, near a thicket of underbrush; here and there in the same field, but at some distance from us, were solitary black tents, low lying, with a thin reek of smoke creeping dolefully through the roof of each. These tents were the abodes of fellaheen and isolated Bedouins. A mile beyond lay the village; a hillside village flattened out to make it fit on a plain. I think if David had dared, he would have suggested that as the ground was so soft, and the work of pitching the tents so difficult, I would better spend the night in that village. But I had spoken long and earnestly that morning on the subject of sleeping in native huts; so he forebore.

We went to the khan. This was a one-roomed building, most of it taken up by the horses. At one end was a stone ledge or platform, rising about three feet from the ground, in length the width of the room, and in width barely eight feet. Here, on mats, sleep muleteers and stablemen. In many cases, two or three

entire families use such a platform as a dining, living, and sleeping room, the rest of the room being given up to live stock, such as horses, cows, donkeys, and even camels.

At the edge of the platform, hollows are dug which act as mangers. It was, without doubt, in such a place that the new-born Child was laid when, there being no room for them at the inn, the Holy Family slept in the village khan or stable. Here, on some such mat as nowadays covers the floor of these platforms, lay the mother, while the Child was laid beside her in the hollowed stone that served as a manger. This idea is not as poetical, perhaps, as that seen in Italian paintings, where a child is depicted in a gilt-barred artistic manger, with two impossible cows and a donkey feeding close by; but it is far more correct.

Larger khans have two stories and are built in the form of an L, the lower floor on the longer side of the angle being built as I have just described, while the rest of the building is taken up with small rooms for lodging or storage purposes.

When we entered the khan where we were to wait until our camp could be prepared, we found it already occupied by four or five Bedouins, who had stopped there for shelter on their way home. They were talking, and examining some horses when we entered. Beyond returning their civil salute, I paid little attention to these men, but being tired and wet, threw myself down on one of the mats and slept until word came that our tents were pitched. On the way to camp, I asked David where the Bedouins we had seen came from.

"They are a tribe from the Land of Moab," he said.

"They have crossed Jordan with all their flocks and herds, and encamped on the plain of Merom for better pasturage. You said you wanted to stop among the Bedouins awhile, sir; and as the Sheik of this tribe is a friend of mine, we may as well stop with him as with any other tribe. Will you go over for a short visit to-night, just to meet him and drink a cup of coffee, before we go there for good?"

"No, I will stay in camp to-night, and go over to-morrow. It is too cold and wet now."

I was sorry enough afterwards that I had made this decision.

There are degrees of dampness, and our camp had reached the superlative. Tents, table-cloth, and furniture were drenched alike. A little impromptu brook ran before the dining-tent. In the middle of dinner I looked up, and saw a frog sitting on the opposite end of the table staring at me. Some toothpicks in a vase began to move around mysteriously. Picking the vase up, I found that some sort of water-insect with hordes of legs had fallen in and was struggling to make his escape over the rolling line of toothpicks. I did not enjoy dinner at all, that night. Imbarak, like some gaunt, prehistoric beast, hopped between kitchen and dining-tents, and as he took away the last course, announced in some tongue he believed to be French, that the rain was so heavy none of the village men would consent to act as guards.

David had a raging headache and had gone to bed. It was too wet to sit outside, so I lighted all the candles and sat down to read. As I was going to visit the Bedouins on the morrow, I wished to be somewhat

posted and had accordingly borrowed from David a paper he himself had written, entitled "The Bedouins; their History, Manners, and Customs." It was written in excellent English and with a clear knowledge of the subject. I read it through, and will recount a few of the principal facts, together with such information on the tent-dwellers as I have picked up from personal experience with them, or heard from other travelers. I may unconsciously idealize to a certain extent, which is but natural; for after my dealings with other types of the "poor benighted Heathen in distant lands," as the Mission tracts have it, the Bedouin was a refreshing change.

This, then, is part of the material I have gathered from what I read, saw, and heard of the Sons of Ishmael.

CHAPTER XIII.

MY FRIENDS, THE BEDOUINS.

"THOU shalt call his name Ishmael; . . . and he will be a wild man; and his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him."

The prophecy has been fulfilled in every generation from Ishmael himself down to the Bedouins of the present day.

By the term "Bedouin," I do not refer to such fellaheen as happen to live in black tents; nor to the canaille who help unwary tourists to climb the Great Pyramid at Ghizeh. These latter are the veriest offscouring of the East, a choice and well-trained assortment of thieves, cut-throats, and beggars, who live upon travelers.

The genuine Bedouin is seldom found west of the Jordan, and is utterly unlike hordes of country folk that go under his name. There is much the same difference between the true son of Ishmael and other Syrians as between a blooded race and a coach horse. The Bedouin stands out as a type by himself. His Arabic is the purest spoken in Syria; his bravery and

hardihood are proverbial; his hospitality almost absurd in breadth; and through his whole existence runs a poetical, romantic vein oddly out of place nowadays.

Children of nature they are, dwellers in tents, living by their flocks and agriculture; varying this rural life by occasionally taking a more than neighborly interest in the herds and crops of their neighbors. These proofs of excessive interest lead naturally to retaliation, and hot fights ensue. Much of the Bedouins' time is spent in warfare with surrounding tribes, brought on by some robbery or elopement, or to avenge an insult offered by one tribe to the guest of another.

In spring and summer their tent life is idyllic. Roaming over the rich hill country to avoid the heat, they pasture their flocks, fight any casual neighbors, improvise and sing ballads of love and war, and intermarry. They have no care for the civilized world or for the government. Many tribes are outlawed, but as they beat all troops sent against them by the Pasha, and then can boast of their victories in the streets of the principal cities, the law's ban rests lightly on them. Their character and mode of living form an Oriental version of the legend of Robin Hood, desert and mountain taking the place of the greenwood.

Winter drives the romance from most rural lives, and the Bedouin's is no exception to this rule. The ground is too wet for comfort, the tents blow down or decay from continuous dampness, and the tent-dwellers cannot, as a tribe, seek shelter in cities, but must bear rain and intense cold as best they can. To make matters worse, their cattle and flocks often grow mad from exposure to the weather, and stampede *en masse* to gain refuge in

the tents. In consequence, often in the dead of night a tribe is wakened by a scurry of hoofs, and before anything can be done to check them, a thousand cattle charge the tents, beating them down and stamping furniture and utensils into the mud.

Bedouins in Council.

A famous Sheik once said to me, as he pointed to a dog that was rolling in the mud and offal of the road: —

"That is the condition of the Bedouin in winter."

Luckily, the Syrian winter is short, and by the end of February it is virtually past.

The Bedouin form of government is simple. Each

tribe is ruled by a Sheik or prince, and these are, in turn, commanded by Emirs. The office of Sheik is hereditary. His duty is to act as leader and chief magistrate to his people, and, during the marches, to ride ahead and choose the next camping-ground. His hospitality has become world-renowned. Any man, be he friend, stranger, or even enemy, may ride to the Sheik's tent and demand food and shelter. This is granted for as long a time as he may care to remain with the tribe. Moreover, should the guest chance to be a fugitive from justice or pursued by a hostile tribe, his entertainers are bound by the unwritten laws of their race to fight in his defense and to try in every way to protect him. A story is told of a Sheik whose worst enemy came to his tent, half-starved, and begged for food. The Sheik, remembering their enmity, asked : —

"How much food can you expect from the hands of a foe ?"

"That," replied the guest, "I leave to your generosity."

The Sheik left the tent, and walked out among his flocks, where, drawing his sword, he killed over fifty sheep and goats. He was with difficulty restrained from killing the entire stock, his sole wealth, to prove his generosity.

A man who has been entertained by the Bedouins, even if he has merely broken bread among them, receives the protection of their tribe for a period varying from twenty-four to eighty-four hours after his departure. If, during this time of protection, he is attacked, insulted, or robbed, the tribe he has just left is obliged to avenge the wrong and recover the stolen

goods. This may look like carrying hospitality to an extreme, but it is customary, and the force of custom is strong in the East. Desert customs do not change with each year; we find instances of this entertainment of strangers as far back as Genesis, where Abraham, sitting at the door of his tent in the heat of the day, begged two strange travelers to enter and rest, even killing the choicest of his flock for their repast. We see another instance in Judges, where Jael called to Sisera to turn aside from his flight, offering him rest, food, and protection in her tent.

There are no restaurants or police stations in the desert, and the natives simply do what they can to make up for the deficiency by feeding and defending each other. When we think of this, and remember the lawlessness and lack of food in the waste places far from cities and seacoast, the Bedouin ideas of hospitality seem less exaggerated.

Now and then in some European or American magazine we read a so-called Bedouin love-song, and as a rule regard it sceptically, thinking there can be no poetry in the mind of a savage. Yet I have heard among bards of the desert many songs in praise of love, or horses, that have far more true poetry and vigor than all the magazine poems which purport to be Arabic translations.

True, in the genuine Bedouin song there is not quite so strong an Oriental atmosphere as in the translations made by our Western poets; but that is to be expected. The formula — or shall I say recipe? — for writing Arab songs in English is quite simple when once you learn it. A casual mention of the Prophet, here and there,

or a plentiful sprinkling of Allahs, Maschallahs, and Bismillahs gives a delightful Eastern flavor to such effusions; while a whole Arabic phrase, such as "la illa illa Allah," or "Allah hu Akbar," not only ensures immediate success, especially when a translation to each phrase can be added without spoiling the verse or appearing to instruct the reader, but also stamps the writer as a man of learning and travel. By carefully following this scheme, a first-rate song of Saharan love and murder may be written in a New York study.

The real love-song of the Bedouin has little *motif*, and is usually taken up with similes in praise of the loved one's beauty. The song I heard in the Beirût music hall is a tolerable specimen, except that among the Ishmaelites less conventional comparisons are used and the song is set to wilder music. Women and horses divide about equally the attention of the Bedouin singer; the horse, if either, having the advantage. Such songs lose most of their beauty in translation.

The war ballads are of a different nature, telling heroic deeds of some special hero. One that I recollect (I think it has been already translated into English verse) tells of a young Sheik, who with his mother and a few servants was crossing from the Jordan to his home beyond the mountains of Moab, when a hostile tribe barred his way. The young Sheik showed fight, and gathering his followers about him prepared for a charge. The leader of the hostile band laughed at him and said: —

"You are but a child! Go back to your mother."

The boy, having placed his mother in safety, attacked his enemies and, as usual in such songs, after a hard

battle put the whole force to flight, at last killing the man who had laughed at him. He himself was bleeding from a hundred wounds, but before he left the field he looked from the flying tribesmen to his enemy who lay dying before him and cried: —

"Now I will go back to my mother!" and riding to where she stood awaiting him, fell dead at her feet.

Another song tells of a father who yielded to his twelve-year-old son's wish to see a battle, and took him to watch a fight against another tribe. The little fellow became separated from his father and was killed by the enemy's Sheik. The father's tribe won the battle and the Sheik who had killed the boy was captured. The father, half-crazed with grief and anger at his son's death, cut off the right hand that had done the deed, then, putting out the prisoner's eyes, left him to wander about among the mountains until starvation or wild beasts should end his life.

I have heard many such songs, some based on facts, some quite imaginary. Little knowledge of verse-writing is needed to compose them, for rhyme, rhythm, and meter are alike unnecessary. The various tunes are much alike, and the song is usually nothing more than a prose story chanted in a sing-song tone.

Bedouin morals are decidedly good — at least among the women. Strict watch is set by every man over the women of his family, and the lightest indiscretion is dealt with harshly. If a woman is even suspected of undue liking for some outsider, her husband — or if she is unmarried, her brother — takes her on a hunting or riding trip for a few days, and comes back without her. No one asks what has become of the missing girl, and

the avenger of family honor is never questioned or punished, but gains honor for the act.

While I was in Jerusalem a Bedouin girl was murdered. These were the facts in the case: The girl was in town with her mother, buying cloth. A young man went to the Land of Moab, where her family lived, and told her brother it was rumored by some of his friends that a girl who looked like his sister had been seen leaning from her lattice to speak to a man in the street below.

The brother waited for no proofs. He set out for Jerusalem, reaching the Holy City one evening at sunset. He spoke to no one, but went straight to the house where his sister lodged, and, halting beneath her window, called her by name. The girl, hearing her brother's voice, ran to the lattice, and as she appeared was shot through the head and killed. The brother escaped through the sympathizing crowd, and gained the shelter of his own tribe before he could be caught. I believe his feat has been set forth in song, and is now chanted to wives and sisters as a warning.

The Bedouins are Mohammedans and are more devout than town-dwellers. Their marriage customs are slightly different from those of the Moslems, a rude ceremony being performed, and the courtship is conducted on a more formal scale. The would-be bridegroom sends a delegation of friends to wait on his belovéd's father. The father, as they enter his tent, offers them food, which they always refuse, declaring they will neither eat nor drink until their suit is accepted. This custom also dates back to Genesis. When Abraham's servant, coming to the tent of Bethuel to demand Rebekah as wife for Isaac, found "meat set before

him to eat," he said, "I will not eat until I have told mine errand."

After the usual period of courtship, the groom's friends, when the bride is of another tribe, go in a body, men and women together, to bring the bride home; taking with them a richly decked camel on which she is to ride. As they near the tents of the bride's tribe they break into song. This is a signal for the women of the tribe to rush out and pelt them with stones and sticks. The groom's friends respond, and an interesting fight follows. This is done to show the unwillingness felt by the "home" tribe to give their daughter away.

At last both parties make up their quarrel, and together go to the tents, where a feast is prepared. After this meal is eaten the bride-elect mounts the camel, and the band sets out for the groom's home. Arriving there, two stones are set at a certain distance apart, on each of which stands one of the two contracting parties. When they are thus placed, the tribe standing about them in a circle, the groom cries three times: —

"While we two stand on these stones, bear witness, O God of mankind, that this woman is my wife, and I her husband."

When he has finished speaking, the bride makes a similar declaration, and they are man and wife by Bedouin law.

A marriage feast follows this, lasting late into the night. The groom on leaving the feast invariably finds that his wife has run away, and is forced to go from tent to tent in search of her, seldom finding her for two or three days. A bride always runs away from her husband's tent on her wedding-day. It is a time-honored

custom, and if she fails to observe it, she and her family are disgraced. I do not know why this should be, but so it is. Perhaps it was owing to this custom that Jacob did not discover at first that his veiled wife was Leah the "tender-eyed," and not the woman for whom he had toiled seven years.

Wedding dowry among the Bedouins is often given in the form of live stock instead of money. Sometimes when a young man is too poor to buy a wife, and has no friends who will lend him enough cattle, the modern Jacob will work for a girl's father for a certain length of time, varying from one to seven years.

When a girl's parents do not wish her to marry a man of another tribe the lover lies in wait and steals her, taking her to a third tribe whose Sheik is asked to arbitrate the matter. If the girl, after reaching this neutral ground, does not wish to marry her abductor, she is sent back home escorted by the Sheik's servants. If, however, she does wish to go on with the affair the couple are married, and a delegation is sent to the bride's father to reconcile him to the match. If the Sheik who sends the delegation is powerful and rich, the plan usually succeeds. Otherwise, a war ensues between the two tribes. In any case, as soon as the girl's elopement is discovered her tribe attacks that of her lover, and the powers of the arbitrating Sheik are once more called into play.

I have given here a bald and incomplete account of the Bedouin; should I go into the subject with any thoroughness I should have space for little else. I have merely tried to give a faint idea of the habits and customs of a people who interest me, and who have stood still, unhurried by the rush of civilization, since the days of Ishmael.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MIDNIGHT VISITOR — IN THE TENTS OF ISHMAEL.

I FINISHED David's essay at ten o'clock, and, crossing through puddles of water to my own tent, was soon asleep.

About two o'clock in the morning I heard a slight noise, and, as I opened my eyes, I thought I saw a faint gleam of light for a moment at one end of the dark tent, as though the curtain had been lifted. The light lasted only the fraction of a second, but though darkness and quiet followed, I was sure something or someone had raised the tent-curtain. So I went out to explore. As I left the tent I stepped above my ankles in the brook, and this incident disgusted me with myself for leaving a dry tent on such an errand, so I was less watchful than I should otherwise have been. The camp-fire was out, the two muleteers David had set as guards in default of village watchmen, had crawled into the kitchen-tent and gone to sleep, and there was no sign of life to be seen. I walked around the camp and looked blindly into the thicket, but as it was raining hard, and since in the darkness I constantly stumbled over tent-ropes, I soon

came back and decided that the gleam of light I had seen was nothing but a dream after all.

Next morning I was awakened by the noise of men talking excitedly, and looking out, saw the village Sheik and a few other peasants, all looking very much scared, surrounded by a ring of our muleteers who were shrieking and shaking their fists excitedly, while David stood near by talking in a low voice to Imbarak. Seeing me, he left the group and came forward.

"Have you missed anything, sir?" he asked.

I asked what he meant, and he went on to explain that our camp had been visited during the night by a village thief, who, finding us unguarded, had examined the tents. The curtains were fastened down, but he had run his hand between the canvas and the ground and grasped whatever was within reach.

Imbarak and John of the Oriental name had been relieved of several cloaks and shoes; the kitchen tent had lost half its utensils, and David's Beirût boots and mackintosh had been stolen. I went back to my own tent, remembering the patch of light I had seen near the ground, and found I had suffered least of all. A heavy sea-coat I had brought with me for cold weather was the extent of my loss. This coat had been rolled up the evening before and laid close to the tent-wall. My camera, that had stood just beside it, was untouched.

David offered again and again to pay me for the lost coat, but as he had lost far more than I, and as it was in a measure my own fault for not looking more carefully for the thief on my midnight round, I would not hear of his paying anything. I told him of my seeing

the tent-curtain raised, and of my walk about the camp.

"It was beyond doubt the thief that woke you," he said excitedly. "But why didn't you shoot him, sir?"

I pointed out the slight difficulties that lie in the way of shooting a man who is not in sight; and he began to blame himself for his carelessness in sleeping so soundly.

While I was at breakfast I could hear David giving the village Sheik huge pieces of his mind for harboring such thieves in his wretched collection of huts, and Imbarak glided about more mournfully than ever.

After breakfast I asked David what was to be done in the matter.

"If we had three days to spare I should send over to the nearest garrison for soldiers. They would come and live at the village, eating the people's food and feeding their horses on the village crops, until the thief was given up, or the money paid for everything stolen. That is our manner of collecting bad debts."

We had no time for this, but were forced to move on. The Bedouin camp to which we were bound lay a few miles to the south.

"What will the thief do with the things he has stolen?" I queried as we rode along. I stand over six feet two in height and am broad in proportion; it puzzled me to know how a little Syrian peasant could wear a sea-coat that fell almost to my heels.

"He must carry all he has stolen to Damascus," explained David, "and sell each thing for a small part of its value to some man who buys stolen goods. He dare not wear such clothes himself, for everyone would know

he had stolen them. As for your coat, some Nubian at Damascus may be large enough to wear it."

After a few minutes' silence he said: —

"I wish, sir, we had gone to the Bedouins' camp last evening for supper. We should then have been under their protection; they would soon have found where our goods were, and got them back for us."

I said nothing, but it came to my mind that possibly some of these Bedouins might have the very best reasons for knowing the whereabouts of the things we had lost.

Half an hour's ride brought us to the outskirts of the encampment where we were to stay. Cattle wandered about, seeking pasturage; here and there we saw an African buffalo, such as are found in quantities along the Nile, long-horned, coarse-haired, and ugly, feeding with the cows. The sheep and goats were farther away on the high ground, guarded by mummy-like shepherds, each swathed in an abieh with the muzzle of a gun sticking stiffly from the top.

Before us lay a village of tents, woven from the long hair of black Syrian goats. I had seen isolated black tents scattered all along the road since we left Beirût; but here were several hundred, some laid out in rude imitation of streets, and others pitched at irregular distances about the plain.

Here and there a man sat in a doorway, or a woman might be seen cooking, but for the most part the inhabitants were hiding from the rain in their tents, or hunting among the hills. The women that I saw would have cured me of any illusion, had I not already thrown aside all illusions, as to the beauty of the daughters of the desert. Unwashed, and unbecomingly dressed in the

regulation blue robe, they were still further disfigured by tattoo marks on forehead, nose and lips; in some cases these tattoo lines ran up from each corner of the mouth, giving the wearer's face a ludicrous resemblance to *l'homme qui rit.*

I have seen but one Bedouin woman who was an exception to this rule of ugliness. She was the wife of the Sheik of the tribe, and I will speak of her later.

As we rode through the street I was able to study the architecture of the dwellings, which is of a style that dates back almost to the Flood.

Woven, as I have said, of black goat's hair, the tents are from ten to thirty feet long, with a slender roof-tree running down the center. The tent along the roof-tree is perhaps eight feet high, and slopes gradually down on either side to a height of four feet from the ground at an angle that makes the tent about twelve feet wide. The space between eaves and ground is left open in summer, and in winter is filled by a wainscot of closely plaited bamboo twigs. Each tent is divided into at least two parts; some into three. The whole tent is divided into a reception or guest-room, where the men of the family sit, eat, transact business, and receive visitors; the harem apartment, where the women and children spend their days, and where the whole family sleep; and the kitchen.

The last-named is by no means the least important room; for in it is a continuous process of cooking. Each relay of guests that arrives must be served with a fresh meal, and I have seen a single Bedouin host order from his kitchen as many as five breakfasts in one morning for five different parties of visitors. The

wife must always have food ready for any stranger who may come unexpectedly, and woe to her if, after her lord and master has called for the meal, she keeps him waiting.

The host sits in the guest-room and receives the newcomer. His wife must wait in the harem with her ear close to the tent-curtain, listening for any order. When food is required, the husband calls to her through the tent-curtain and commands her to bring, or send it in. If she is a good wife she will comply; if not, or if by chance she has forgotten to prepare anything, she will pay no attention to the call. Her husband, if he is a very patient man, will give the order a second or even a third time. Should the wife through disobedience or neglect still fail to respond, the chances are that his next remark through the tent-curtain will be the three-sentence formula whose burden is, "You are divorced," and from which there is no appeal.

Toward the end of the village stood a large tent somewhat apart from the others, a spear driven into the ground before it. This was the Sheik's home. As our horses stopped near the door, half a dozen men ran out, some taking our bridles, others holding the stirrups while we dismounted. We left the horses in charge of Serkeese and the Sheik's servants and walked to the tent. Before we could reach it a man stepped out and came forward to meet us.

He was tall, lightly but strongly built, with a thin, high-bred face, aquiline nose, kind eyes, and a firm mouth. Richly, but, for an Oriental, quietly dressed, he looked every inch an aristocrat.

David introduced him as our host, the Sheik. He

welcomed us kindly and ushered us into the tent. Here we found fifteen other men — guests and elders of the tribe — who arose as we entered. David had sent a messenger to tell the Sheik of our contemplated visit, so I found a place already prepared for my reception. A soft red Persian rug was laid at one end of the tent, opposite the Sheik's seat, with a padded camel's saddle on which to rest my head. The Sheik said that as I was from a foreign country he would not trouble me to take off my boots, as is the custom of Easterners on entering a dwelling of any sort. But when one is a guest it is always wise, I think, to fall in with the ways of the house; accordingly, I told him I did not object to the custom, and forthwith began to struggle with my boots. They were high and close-fitting, and, after my wet ride, thick with mud and clay; so the task of removing them was not easy, nor was I graceful in my efforts. I was quite consoled by hearing David tell the assembled guests that, in my own country, people only take off their boots on entering the house of some one they especially wish to honor. The Sheik bowed and looked pleased, and the rest of the party gazed on my mad struggles with a sort of awe. When at last the boots came off, I was more at ease to note my surroundings.

The red rug and camel saddle evidently formed the place of honor, for the other guests sat cross-legged on mats. In front of me smouldered the fire, in which stood three blackened coffee-pots fastened together with chains. Just opposite and facing me on the other side of the fire, the Sheik sat on a low uncomfortable wooden

stool. Behind him stood and sat his attendants, and to the left were guests and elders.

A relay of men had arrived a few moments before me, and breakfast was preparing for them. The Sheik said if I did not wish to eat with these men, he would have a separate breakfast brought for me; but I begged to be allowed to eat with the rest, and said that I was tired of eating alone.

Breakfast was brought in. A great bowl filled with some combination of rice, meat, and lentils, — very thick, and just off the fire, — was borne by two servants and set down in the middle of the tent. A third servant laid a circle of flat loaves of unleavened bread, still soft and warm from the oven, about the bowl. Two smaller dishes — one of clotted milk, the other of wild honey — were placed near by. We drew up in a large circle about the ring of loaves and fell to eating. Then did I regret most heartily my folly in asking to eat with the others, for their table manners leave just a little to be desired. Spoons, forks, and knives were not used; each man ate in true Bedouin style, using the bare hand, too often unwashed, to ladle out a share from the main dish. The method of bread-eating was still more unique. My fellow-diners would break off pieces of a loaf and, folding them spoonwise, dip them into one or both of the smaller dishes, then swallow the improvised spoon and its contents at a mouthful.

This, as I tell it, does not sound exactly appetizing, but I grew used to it after a while, and at last thought nothing of eating from the same dish into which a dozen other men plunged their hands. I could never become expert, though, in the Bedouin method of eat-

ing from the main dish. This method consisted of rolling a handful of food into a ball and tossing it into the mouth. It is not easily learned.

The custom of several men dipping bread into the same dish was common in the time of Christ. The Master named his betrayer as "One of the twelve that dippeth with me in the dish."

The Sheik did not eat with us, but sat a little apart, in order, David said, to show his humility and his sense of his own unworthiness. This is done by almost all Bedouin hosts.

After we had finished eating, another party took our places. When, finally, everyone had been fed, coffee was made. A servant brought a mortar and pestle of Bashan oak, set it on the ground by the fire, and poured in coffee-beans, adding now and then pinches of spice from a pouch at his side. He then began to beat the mixture to a powder, playing a sort of rhythmic tattoo on the sides of the mortar as he worked. Coffee is always made in the guests' presence that they may see that no poison is put in it. This is much on the same plan as the old Scottish custom, which gave the "loving-cup" three handles; one handle to be held by the guest and the other two by the host, in order that he might have no hand free to stab his visitor while he drank.

A great deal of pounded coffee was put in a very little hot water, and, when made, was served, unsweetened, in small, handleless cups. In strength, it was the quintessence of coffee, and the spice was rather an improvement. Fresh coffee is made and drunk at least a dozen times a day.

There was no chimney in the tent, but the smoke escaped freely through the large meshes of the roof. It is an odd fact that though we could see through the holes in the woven roof and though smoke could escape with all ease, no rain ever penetrated, however hard the downpour might be.

"Things are a little unsettled here;" said David in English as we all sat smoking after the repast; ".the tribe moves to the higher pasture grounds on the hills next week, and they are making ready to go."

While the Sheik arbitrated a horse trade between two tribesmen, and some of the guests went to sleep, I made David explain some of the workings of the camp. While we talked a woman stood for a moment by the tent-door. She was very tall and finely built, and, despite her tattooing, was almost beautiful. Her face and carriage were queenly, and she reminded me of Boadicea. After a short survey she passed on and entered the harem.

"That is the Sheik's favorite wife," explained David. "Do you see the tent-wall bulge out there? That is where she and the other women are sitting. They spend much of their time leaning against the partition-curtain. They like to hear what the men talk about, and besides, they must be where they can hear the minute the Sheik calls for anything. Sarah sat in such a place when she heard Abraham talking with the two angels."

It was a lazy, unexciting week I spent among the sons of Ishmael; and I will not detail it closely here. During this time I learned and witnessed most of the customs I have mentioned. I heard the desert songs sung

at night beside camp-fires, where a crowd of listening warriors and shepherds sat grouped about the blaze, their eyes all fixed on the inspired singer who droned a series of nasal and guttural sounds in a minor key, to the vast delight of his audience.

I also saw the desert sports. They are well worth seeing. Besides foot-racing and jumping, there were many clever horseback feats. A rider would drive his spear upright into the earth, then riding forward would seize it with one hand and gallop his horse about it in so small a circle as not to lose hold of the spear, or to dislodge it from the ground. I have seen two Bedouins charge towards each other with spears aloft, then, at a signal, plunge their spear-points into the ground, and, without pausing, gallop about the weapons in the manner I have described, and return to their former places. Another equestrian exercise was somewhat like our own game of tag, horses and men alike entering into the spirit of the thing, dodging and wheeling with wonderful quickness.

We were regally entertained, and never have I met with greater kindness or more perfect courtesy than was shown by these tent-dwellers during our stay with them.

Unfortunately, they had, at that time, no unpleasantness with neighboring tribes, so I can relate no soul-stirring adventures or say I beheld the war-songs realized and saw hecatombs of men slain.

When our hosts broke camp and went to the mountains for better pasturage, we parted from them and turned our faces toward the Sea of Galilee, a clean camp, and civilized meals.

CHAPTER XV.

ONE OF JOSEPH'S PITS — SEA OF GALILEE.

WE rode almost due south after leaving the camp of our Bedouin friends, and at noon stopped at a solitary ruined khan. The khan dated from the Roman period, and is built about a well. This well, say the Mohammedans, is the identical "pit" into which Joseph was lowered. There is no ground for such a belief; but vulgar fact and likelihood never stand in the way of a true tradition-hunter. I grew, during my sojourn in Syria, rather weary of seeing pits where Joseph was imprisoned. They fairly dot the country. The most probable of the several places is the well at Dothan, though even that is discredited by some authorities. It would seem from the many wells where this lowering feat is said to have been enacted, that Joseph's brethren made a tour of Syria, dropping the embryo patriarch into every empty pit they found. It was a bad habit, and I do not wonder that Joseph went to Egypt to get away from them.

The khan where we lunched is now used only as a stopping-place for belated travelers. A few tramps and shepherds occasionally sleep there, also a *soi-disant* caretaker and his wife. I wandered through the dilapidated,

cave-like rooms and tried to climb to the roof, while David was arranging my luncheon on a semicircular parapet that stood, surrounded by a low masonry wall, some fifteen feet above the ground. Catching sight of me as I came back from exploring the khan, the dragoman leaned over the parapet and began to bemoan the fact that the wine-bottle had tumbled from the wall down on the rocks below. After our usual performance, he drew the bottle from his saddlebags, set it on the improvised table, and, while I lunched, gave me an account of the well.

"The Mohammedans all believe Joseph was lowered into this very well," he said. "The well was possibly here in the time of Joseph, for it is one of the oldest in Palestine; but I don't believe Joseph ever came so far north. When Jacob told him to seek his brethren he thought they were somewhere near Nablous. It is not likely a little boy would have been sent alone on an errand as far as the Sea of Galilee."

"Joseph was his father's favorite," I remarked, "I don't believe, myself, that Jacob would have sent him so far in an unsettled country. David, what do you think of Joseph?"

Jamal glanced about him, then said confidentially,—

"I think, sir, that Joseph was a prig."

I agreed with him, and confessed that my sympathies had always been with the eleven brethren, who, disgusted with his tale-bearing, had thrust the self-righteous little fellow into the pit. David and I were doubtless quite wrong in this idea of the worthy patriarch. The thought was all out of keeping with Sunday-school teachings; but in places where such things

are unknown and where the stage-setting still remains to tell us that the actors who walked through these scenes were ordinary men like ourselves, and not demi-gods, as we westerners fancy them, one is apt now and then to harbor unconventional notions.

After lunch we rode through the hills toward the Sea of Galilee, stopping for cigarettes and tobacco at one of Rothschild's chimerical Jew colonies. This colony had a real street, the huts were numbered, and there was a shop or two. It seemed quite metropolitan after the wilderness.

A Moslem village is on the hill-top near by, overlooking the Sea and Plains of Galilee. By way of variety it began to rain as we neared the village. A hundred yards down the hill was a native burying-ground, and as we rode past the village we saw that a funeral was in progress. Dismounting, we walked to the spot, and David, by a few inquiries, learned that a four-year-old child was to be buried.

"If it had been a grown man we should have seen a great mourning," he told me, "but it is only a child — a little girl — and no one cares very much. Still, they mourn."

As we neared the crowd of mourners I noted the surroundings. The hillside for some distance was dotted with egg-shaped areas of stones. One of these marked each grave; tombstones and mounds being unheard-of touches of elegance. The method of interment is something like this. The bottom of a grave is usually covered with a layer of stones. On these is laid the body. Then comes some earth, and the grave is filled to the ground level with stones. The stones protect the dead

from jackals and hyenas, against whom mere earth is no barrier.

David and I stood on a rock above the head of the grave. At the foot of the grave was a crowd of men and women, weeping and looking somewhat bored. On the rock near sat half a dozen old men, the place of honor being occupied by an old priest, or imam, who muttered prayers very fast in a low tone, holding out his hands, palms upward. The other old men held their hands in the same attitude, and at each pause in the prayer groaned "Amen!"

David stood overlooking the grave and making consolatory speeches to the crowd below, who responded with thanks and benedictions. He resembled some weird, gigantic raven, as he stood above the grave, draped in his streaming black cloak and hood, and giving forth consolation in hoarse, guttural Arabic. I told him of the resemblance afterward, and he laughed heartily over it.

At last the grave was filled, and the mourners, turning away, kissed each other, every one in turn; and then adjourned to the village for a "funeral breakfast" (I think I coin that term), at the house of the bereaved family. We were invited to partake, but declined with thanks.

On the way back to our horses I noticed several women at different graves, and asked David what they were doing there.

"Whenever there is a funeral," he explained, "the other villagers who have dead friends or relatives take that time to come to the graveyard and mourn them."

We stopped beside one group. It consisted of three

women, one of whom, almost prostrate on the ground, her head covered with ashes, moaned out a chant often broken by sobs and wails. Two other women crouched beside her; rocking back and forth, crooning a sort of song as accompaniment.

"It is a widow," said David. "She is at the grave of her husband. The other two are friends who have come to mourn with her. She is singing of her loss."

I append the song or dirge she chanted. I have translated it metrically and almost literally, from notes I made on the spot: —

"I arose and came to the grave at the breaking of the day,
To the grave on the barren hillside where Abou, my husband, lay.
I called to him by his name, but no answer came back again;
Once more I repeated my call but repeated it all in vain.
His dear voice will never speak from his bed beneath the stones,
He sleeps too deeply the sleep of death to hark to the widow's moans.
Who will care for his children now since my prayers are all unheard?
Ah, form in the grave there among the rocks! answer one single word!"

The foregoing is as nearly as possible an exact translation of the dirge I heard the woman chant at her husband's grave. There is a family resemblance among all such chants in the East.

Riding on, we came, about five in the afternoon, to the lower ground about the Sea of Galilee. The Waters of Merom are over five hundred feet above the level of the Mediterranean, while the waters of Galilee are about six hundred and fifty feet below the greater sea.

The two inland lakes, Merom and Gennesaret, lie so near each other that at a few miles' distance both can be seen in the same glance. The Sea of Galilee is disappointing as to size, for it is only seven miles wide by fifteen miles long. Looking down from the mountains I could take in through the clear atmosphere a panorama of the whole lake.

We halted our horses, and David pointed out the different points of interest. The lake is quite regularly oblong in shape, its length lying from north and northeast to south. High, irregular mountains fringe it. On the north, reaching to the water's edge, we saw a flat green plain. This is the traditional and most probable spot where the five thousand "sat down by companies on the green grass" and were miraculously fed by Christ. Farther down, to the right, between Magdala and Bethsaida, lies another green space close to the lake and partly covered with low trees. Here it was that the three thousand are believed to have been fed.

The stone-walled enclosure just below the meadow of Five Thousand marks the site of Capernaum; some distance to the south, along the lake, are a fisherman's hut and a tent — all that remains of Bethsaida. Beyond this, and far behind the Plain of the Three Thousand, rises a mountain at whose base is a patch of grass, green all the year. The mountain has two horns, that nearest the strip of verdure being the scene of the Sermon on the Mount. Opposite this, to the northwest, is a higher mountain on whose top, the highest point in Galilee, is the city of Safed, visible for miles on every side. At this city our Lord may have looked when, preaching in full sight of it He said, —

TIBERIAS.

"A city set upon a hill cannot be hid."

Here too the orthodox Jews of Syria prophesy that Christ will pause on His earthward journey, just before "his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives."

Farther on, beside the lake, near the spot where the vivid green merges into dull brown, lies what is left of Magdala; beyond this, on the western shore, a dirty yellowish-gray city runs out into the water itself. This city is the Tiberias of to-day and of eighteen hundred years ago. We never hear of Christ's entering or preaching in this town, which is strange, since, at the time of His ministry, it must have been an important place.

On the opposite side of the Lake are some mountains that have formed unending sources of delight to legend makers. Scarcely a peak is free from at least one tradition. The favorite tradition hangs about a cone-shaped hill near the water. This is supposed to be the "steep place" whence the herd of swine rushed violently into the sea.

The sea itself is dotted with fishing-boats, broad, awkward craft, propelled by oars so heavy and long that the rower is forced to stand up to pull. I have been rowed in some of these boats, and I cheerfully award them the palm over the whole maritime world for slowness. As for the Oriental oarsmen, they fairly revel in their own lazy motions; and when slow boats and slower boatmen combine, woe to the western passenger's nerves.

Europeans have declared to me that such a storm as that mentioned in the New Testament (Mark iv. 37) could not have arisen on so small a body of water as the Sea of Galilee. This is absurd. The natives are

always in great dread of the Galilee storms; and, a few months before my arrival, a tempest had swept down the Lake from east to west, with such force as to wash away more than thirty houses in Tiberias. These squalls arise suddenly, and, as is usual on mountain lakes, come unannounced. Small wonder that the disciples, native peasants and fishermen for the most part, called on their Lord in fear when the first blast struck them, and "the waves beat into the ship so that it was full."

We rode down a *wady* (gorge) between two hills into the plain of Galilee, and so on to our camp, which was pitched on the beach at Bethsaida, within thirty feet of the water.

"We are almost midway between the two places where the multitude was fed," said David as we smoked together on the beach that night. "Our Lord Jesus Christ," — David, in using the title, always spoke with a simple reverence that brought out the full meaning of the words — "Our Lord Jesus Christ went from one plain to the other in a boat, you remember, sir. He must have passed quite close to where we sit now."

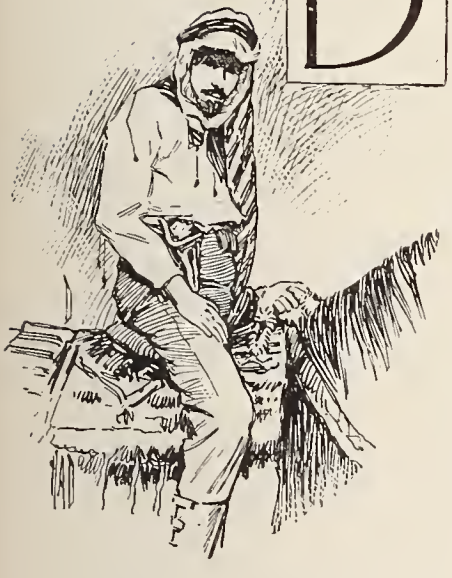
Every foot of land about this little inland sheet of water, so small yet so world-famed, is hallowed by some act, word, or journey of the Master, and I think both of us felt that we were indeed treading upon "holy ground."

It was pleasant, after camping long in rainy uplands, to sleep that night in a dry tent, lulled by the lapping of waves on the shore. The cold, damp air had changed to a warm breeze, and the moon was up. The surroundings were more like those of an evening on the Italian Lakes than of a winter's night in Syria.

The Wandering Field of Joseph.

CHAPTER XVI.

CAPERNAUM — TIBERIAS.



DAVID gave orders in the morning for our camp to be struck and carried ahead to the other side of Tiberias, while he and I should ride to Capernaum and come back by a shorter route. Capernaum lies a few miles to the north, and to reach it we skirted the shore, passing a stream and a ruined Roman aqueduct on the way. A modern house stands a quarter-mile from Bethsaida, in which lives a priest who built it that he might spend his last days in Galilee. I found him a hospitable, interesting old fellow, who spoke several languages and had no

trace of the religious hermit about him. When he heard we were going to Capernaum he asked whether we were going by land or in a boat. I told him I expected to ride, and he answered: —

"I thought you might be going by boat, like Dr. ——" (naming the hero of the Mejdel es Shems dressing episode), "who came here with Jamal."

Dragoman and priest both laughed; then the latter explained to me that the great divine — who seemed to have traveled under an unlucky star — had wished to sail on the Sea of Galilee; that David had accordingly hired a boat at some enormous figure (they charge unheard-of prices for boats on the Lake), and the whole party had rowed from Bethsaida to Capernaum, leaving the horses in camp. A light breeze sprang up while they were on the water, and the clergyman, remembering a scriptural storm in the same place, became frightened and demanded to be set on shore. He was at last induced to stay in the boat until it reached Capernaum, but, the visit over, no persuasion or argument could beguile him into venturing again on the water. In vain did David show that there was no danger and that the Lake was as calm as a mill-pond. The words: "And behold there arose a great tempest on the sea," no doubt rang warningly in the clergyman's ears, and he was firm in his refusal. The upshot of the matter was that they all — there were three ladies in the party — were forced to walk back the entire distance to Bethsaida.

"It had rained the night before," finished the priest, "and the mud was ankle-deep. None of the party looked happy when they got back."

David, as we rode to Capernaum after talking with the priest, was somewhat downcast. Personally, he never told of the many follies and weaknesses common among his travelers, and I think he resented the priest's having done it. I had tried to draw him out more than once on the subject of the reverend gentleman's infirmities, but always in vain.

I have noticed that here in the wilderness a traveler's real character is sure to assert itself. In cities, whether at home or abroad, he is more or less hemmed in by conventionality, and his rough edges are continually smoothed down by friction with fellow-men. But when miles away from civilization, freed from its luxuries and its rigid laws, the veneer wears off and he stands out as Nature made him — frequently showing a wretched piece of work on Nature's part.

We praise the hero of a play who, when fortune and friends desert him, can still stride down to the footlights and express sentiments. Let us watch the same hero, in the wilderness, coming back to camp after a long day's ride in the rain, — soaked to the skin, suffering from neuralgia, his favorite pipe lost, — to find that his tent has blown down and the rain has spoiled his dinner. Under these circumstances we can gain a truer insight into his character than when we saw it tested merely by such bagatelles as loss of money and friends. Possibly, he will still express sentiments. But if he does, they will be of a different sort.

We came, after riding along the shore, to a wall that enclosed a space about two hundred yards square. Leaving the horses with Serkeese, we entered the enclosure. At first glance, we saw a field, irregular

and overgrown, broken capitals and columns peeping here and there through the rank grass; a broad, carved pillar lying lengthwise and rising above the undergrowth; a small Bedouin tent nestling against the sunny side of the enclosure wall; a ruined khan, falling to pieces at the lake-end wall; and at the other end,

CAPERNAUM — "DESOLATION, RUINS, AND TANGLED GRASS."

an unfinished dwarf monastery, closed and ugly. Desolation, ruins, and tangled grass; this is Capernaum, the city Christ loved. I think no traveler ever entered its walls without recalling the regretful yet unchangeable decree: "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven shalt be brought down to hell. For if the mighty works which have been done in thee

had been done in Sodom it would have remained until this day."

An old man — a veritable patriarch — came from the black tent in answer to David's call. This man was care-taker of the place and belonged to no special tribe. His total household, consisting of two wives, a little girl, and a very fat little dog, followed him from the tent and stood gazing at us. As we walked among the broken stones and high grass, David said: —

"There were many more ruins here a few years ago, but the Latins (Roman Catholics) are building that monastery, and they work into it all the stones they can find. Here, beside this pillar used to stand a slab with manna-pots engraved on it. I see they have used that too. These ruins all belonged to the Capernaum synagogue; and the tablet of the manna-pots was the best preserved bit left.

"Dr. —— and some other clergymen told me that our Lord always chose the examples and comparisons for his sermons from things that were close at hand, and that He may have pointed to these very manna-pots when he said, 'Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness.'"

I took a few photographs of the ruins and then wished to take one of the old care-taker and his family, with their tent as a background. It was not easy to group them, for the little girl evidently thought I had a design on her beloved dog, the only dog, by the way, that I saw kept as a pet in the East, and whenever I came near, she seized the beast in both arms and bolted into the tent. At length I overcame her fears, and, by giving her backsheesh and making friends with the dog, I was able to take the photograph.

As we left Capernaum, David pointed out Chorazin, of which little more remains than of Capernaum. The trio — Bethsaida, Capernaum, and Chorazin — have indeed fulfilled their curse. Not five unruined buildings are left standing in all three towns.

We stopped at our last night's camp on our way to Tiberias, and found the work of packing nearly finished. I dismounted to put on my riding-boots, and in doing so incautiously loosed my hold on Massoud's bridle before Serkeese came up to take him. I heard a sudden scurry of feet, and looking back, saw my mount gallop off to a hedge and begin to nibble at some twigs. David groaned.

"Heaven knows when he will get him again," said he. "Once I was riding that horse in the Plain of Esdraelon, and I left him loose for a second. It was twelve whole hours before he let us catch him."

The subject of these remarks still ate at the hedge, the picture of patience and stolidity, and, as I went toward him, paid no attention to me. It was not until I reached out my arm to catch his rein that he seemed to notice my presence. Then he wheeled, his hoofs played within six inches of my face, and with a leap he was over the hedge and stood meek and sad on the other side. There he waited until the muleteers had crept steadily about him, and just as the circle was nearly formed, dashed through the only open space left, and cantered leisurely off toward the hills. I sat down on the saddle-bags, lighted a cigar, and watched the fun. For a solid hour a dozen men, mounted and on foot, chased, cursed, and sought to beguile that little horse. Finally he made a detour, cantered down from the hills,

and, of his own accord came back to camp. When the pursuers returned, panting and profane, he was waiting beside me.

We started for Tiberias; riding through a mountain-pass made by the Romans and still bearing marks of their chariot-wheels in the soft limestone. Cyclamen and a dozen other species of flowering plants grew here, as at Dog River. Rocks arched over the pass, shading it; and a strong Lake breeze made us forget the heat. As we came down into the green Plain of the Three Thousand, we met a drove of half-trained camels, many not yet grown, turned out to graze. Farther on a shepherd-boy sat under the "wide-spreading shade" of a terebinth tree, his flock around him, playing on a reed flute. It was like a scene from Virgil's Eclogues.

Then the sky darkened and the rain began to fall. We passed Magdala, and so on to Tiberias. On the road is a tomb of a Moslem saint. Such tombs are plentiful through Syria; plain mounds or blocks of stone and plaster, under solitary trees whose branches are hung with myriads of rags. These tokens are tied on by devotees, and give the entombed saints' burying places, to say the least, a unique aspect.

We stopped but a short time in Tiberias. For a city of its size it really deserves some sort of prize for the unexcelled filth of its streets and houses. I may be prejudiced, for I visited the town in the rainy season and was almost mired once or twice in deep mud. Contrasting strongly with the rest of the town is the Scotch Hospital on the outskirts. This hospital has been recently built, and is large, airy, and clean. A Scotch doctor, with a staff of trained nurses, presides over it.

My main reason for visiting Tiberias was a wish to learn something of the custom of washing the dead in the Lake. I was unfortunate in not being able to see this ceremony; the European residents have for the time stopped the practice. I heard, however, many more or less revolting accounts of it from eye-witnesses. It is a Jewish custom, and, as Tiberias is a Jewish city, is practiced there almost exclusively. A sect corresponding with the Paraschites of ancient Egypt is set apart to do the washing. Their duty is to prepare the bodies in a certain way and dip them in the water with some sort of religious ceremony. Though I stayed near Tiberias for the purpose, I was never able to see this; and indeed, after the descriptions I had heard, I was rather glad of the disappointment.

We encamped about a mile beyond Tiberias, still on the shore, and I visited the hot mineral baths. I was the only visitor at that time, for it was winter; but in the season hundreds of people come to these springs and stay for weeks.

We saw sometimes large patches of white on the Lake. These were made up, David said, of great flocks of pelicans. Wild ducks, also, we saw in great numbers; and the surrounding hills were full of game. I asked David if many Europeans came here to shoot.

"Not now," he answered. "At one time quite a number came. Did I ever tell you, sir, of the Englishman who was traveling with me and got into such trouble shooting here?"

I had heard an outline of the story from some people at Beirût, but I asked David to tell it.

CHAPTER XVII.

STORY OF A LORDLING'S SCRAPE — BEDOUIN BANDIT — CANA IN GALILEE.

"HE was the son of an English lord," began David, "and was making a tour of Palestine after he left Oxford. When we came to the Sea of Galilee, he saw the wild ducks and wanted to shoot some. I hired a man from Tiberias to row him, and they started after a flock of ducks that was swimming about half a mile from shore. The Englishman had a double-barreled gun loaded with heavy shot; — double B, I think the size was. Some ducks rose in front of the boat, and the Englishman called to his rower to stoop down while he fired at them over his head. The man did as he was told; but after he heard the gun go off he raised his head again, forgetting there was a second barrel. Just as he rose, the second barrel was fired and half of the poor fellow's head was blown off. I saw him afterward. He was not good to look at. The Englishman went almost crazy. You see he was young and not used to such sights. I got him back to camp, and sent a mes-

senger over to the garrison after soldiers, for I knew what would happen. The dead oarsman was carried home; we had not been in camp half an hour when the people of Tiberias came out in a great throng and surrounded us, calling on me to give the Englishman up to them to be killed. I tried to quiet them, but they grew more and more angry every minute. I saw nothing could be done to save my howaji unless the soldiers came soon. I managed to keep the crowd at a distance for a few minutes, and at last, just as their patience was gone, and they were making ready to rush in and kill him in spite of me, the soldiers rode up and drove them back. Then there was a long dispute and it ended in the Englishman's being set free on condition that he would pay five pounds a year as long as he lived to the relations of the dead man."

"I wonder if he still pays it."

"I don't know, sir. He was very glad to get off so easily at the time, for he was nearly dead with fear. He had been brave enough while the real danger lasted, but as soon as he saw there was a chance of escape he broke down."

David told me the story as we were leaving Tiberias. We climbed a steep hill back of the city, often leaving the apology for a road that ran to the summit. Along this road were foot-marks of camels. In one place the soft mud was marked by a long, irregular footprint. I called David's attention to it.

"That is where a camel has slipped and fallen," he said. "See, there is the place where his body went down, just the other side of the foot-mark. The camels are sure-footed and they don't slip often; but when

they do slip, unless they can catch themselves quickly, they usually fall and break a leg. Then they have to be killed."

We had reached the hill-top, and now rode along a narrow path that lay on the very edge of a cliff, overhanging the sea. I suppose we were really some distance beyond the water, but at that height it seemed directly below us. On one side of the path was a shelving bank perhaps eight feet high; on the other a sheer drop to the low grounds beneath. The path itself, barely wide enough for two horses to pass by each other, was of limestone, slippery with rain, and lay at the very edge of a precipice with no barrier to prevent travelers from falling. As we were traversing this in single file, sticking to the landward side, a clatter of hoofs sounded behind us, and two well-mounted Bedouins galloped by. One was some distance in front, and the other, in his haste to catch up, rode carelessly. As he passed us, he was forced to ride near the cliff's edge, and his horse's left hind-foot slipped over the crumbling side. With a jerk of the rein and a few words the rider hurried on, without even taking the trouble to turn from the dangerous edge. Along the brink he went, and fifty yards further on his horse's fore-foot slipped over. The hind-foot clawed desperately at the soft stone, and for an instant horse and rider seemed literally to sway in mid-air. I believe that five extra pounds of weight, or a stiff breeze toward the seaward side, would have sent them both over the precipice. The whole struggle lasted less than ten seconds; the Bedouin cursed his horse and struck him on the head; then, as the beast with a grand

effort regained his footing, he cantered on, still at the edge, as though nothing had happened. He soon caught up with his companion, who had paused and now sat laughing at the other's awkwardness, and the two turned out of sight round a curve.

The sight, and the danger which the man underwent, had startled me; but David thought less of it.

"They are used to perils," he said. "Life is not held as highly here as in European countries."

Leaving the cliff we crossed a long irregular plateau. In the middle of it we met a solitary horseman. I should not have given the man a second glance had not David pointed him out.

"That is a Bedouin and a famous robber," said he. "He dare not go near any garrison town."

The rider, wrapped in a long, ragged abieh and mounted on an ungroomed sorrel, looked anything but romantic. As he drew near I was able to take in every detail of his appearance, from the fierce eyes and thin lips to the unshod feet. I saw the end of a scabbard below his cloak.

"He looks hard up," I said to David. "Do you suppose he will sell his sword? I'd like it as a memento."

We stopped as he reached us, and asked if he would part with it. At first he refused; then said as he was poor we might have it for twelve mejidie, about ten dollars. He drew the weapon and handed it to me for inspection. It was the regulation Bedouin sword, crooked at the end of the hilt to keep it from slipping from the hand, and had a straight steel guard and a long curved blade like that of a saber. Ten inches from the point was a deep dent, caused by some heavy blow. The edge

was like a razor's for sharpness, and from general appearances I thought the weapon must be old. David agreed with me, and I was about to pay the price asked, when he begged me to let him do a little bargaining, and said he could get it more cheaply than I. He was right. Turning to the robber, who had been eying our pistols with disfavor, as no doubt he thought they alone stood between him and a good prize, David said in Arabic, —

"The howaji doesn't care for this sword. He says it has a dent on it and is too old to be of any use."

The robber burst into a flood of praises over the weapon. It was not injured by the dent; his own grandfather, Sheik Something-or-other, had carried it in fight; he himself —

David cut him short.

"The howaji doesn't care to hear all that. He has eyes of his own, and can see how worthless the thing is. But he says, as you seem poor, he will take it and give you two mejidie ($1.70) for backsheesh."

The Bedouin fairly shrieked with amazement. Did we want to rob him (that was good, too!), that we offered so paltry a price? By the beard of his father it was worth double what he had asked for it. And to be offered two miserable little mejidie.

"The sword is worth twelve mejidie," I said in English.

"But he will sell it for two," answered David. "Give back the sword, sir, as if you didn't care for it, and ride on."

I knew by experience that David never erred in judging his own race, so I did as he advised. Thrusting the

sword back into its owner's hand, I shook my head and rode on, followed by Jamal. A few minutes later we were overtaken by our friend, the robber. He gave me the sword and held out his hand.

"He will take the two mejidies, sir," David said, laughing.

"I want the scabbard, too," I insisted. "It will be of no use to him without the sword."

The Bedouin grumbled a little; but handed it over along with the shoulder-belt from which it hung. I felt uncomfortable at having bought the sword for so much less than its value, but David consoled me with the thought that its owner had probably robbed fellow-countrymen of mine to a much greater extent in his time. I gave it to Serkeese to carry for me and we went on. At lunch-time David remarked that the sword was sharp enough to shave with, and I suggested trying it on Serkeese's scrubby beard. The groom laughed when the idea was translated to him, but evidently thought I might be in earnest. He watched me furtively all the afternoon, and the next morning appeared with a clean-shaven chin, thus putting an end to any intentions I might have had in the tonsorial line.

About four in the afternoon we rode into Cana. Here are two churches, and in one of them stand the earthen jars which, says tradition, held the water that Christ turned to wine. These jars have a suspiciously modern look, but the old priest in charge spoke so confidently, and showed them off so proudly, that I had not the heart to air my scepticism.

Cana is now a mere village, but cleaner and more prosperous-looking than many we had seen. It holds

two or three good-sized houses, besides a Greek and a Latin church. The Greek priest who had shown us the wine-jars invited us to have a cup of coffee at his house.

The Greek priest is a common figure in every Eastern crowd. His costume consists of a long black robe and of headgear that looks like a high hat worn upside down; the wearer's head being inserted in the crown, while at the very top spreads the brim. Greek priests usually wear the hair and beard long and unkempt.

We crossed over from the church to the priest's house, where we sat down in the doorway and drank black coffee. The priest talked Arabic with David, while his niece, a slender, European-looking girl who spoke French, showed me some silver ornaments she had bought at Jerusalem; and a crowd of villagers and farmers (Cana is in the center of a farming-district) gathered about the door or brought curios to sell.

After an hour's rest we rode away. We climbed sloping mountains for the next hour or so, then, reaching the top of a high hill, skirted it and came to a regular roadway. We followed this over the crest, and then paused.

On the hill whose opposite side we had climbed lay Nazareth, the city of Christ, surrounded by green palms, the white walls flushing in the sunset. It was a fair sight, and we gazed on it for several minutes without speaking. Then as the sunset flush died away, we rode down through the early twilight into the city.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN NAZARETH — A HOUSE OF MOURNING.

NAZARETH is built into a crescent-shaped hillside and extends from the summit down into the plain beneath. Like many cities of Palestine it has one dominating religion. Tiberias is a thoroughly Jewish town; Nablous (Shechem) is Moslem; while Nazareth is largely made up of Christians.

The location is one of the finest in Syria, and rich foliage, contrasting with the white walls, adds greatly to the town's picturesque beauty. The citizens also have a thrifty, well-kept look and the houses are, as a rule, fairly large, light, and clean.

In the plain just beyond the last house, lies the threshing-floor, and here we were to have camped; but the canteen-mule had as usual got into trouble; this time having lodged his burden somewhere between two rocks, thus stopping the train for more than an hour, and when at last the camp was pitched, the tents were found too wet for comfort. So we put up at the one hotel of the place. This bore the sign: "Hôtel de Nazareth." I cannot say

NAZARETH, "THE CITY OF CHRIST."

why this sign was written in French, unless it was because none of the hostelry's inmates understood that language. Here I was provided with a room. John and his cooking outfit took possession of the kitchen and prepared my meals as usual. There were no other guests at the time, so I had the entire hotel, fully six rooms, at my disposal; and, beyond the ordinary Eastern

THE FOUNTAIN OF THE VIRGIN.

modicum of fleas and mosquitoes, I was made quite comfortable.

David brought his nephew, Nasif Jamal, a graduate of the American College at Beirût, and son of a Church of England clergyman, to see me that evening, and detailed him to act as my guide through Nazareth. Young Jamal was about twenty-one, spoke English,

French, and Arabic perfectly, and was well known in the town. He and I mapped out a scheme of sight-seeing, and early next morning started to carry it into operation. Our first trip was to the Fountain of the Virgin. This is of stone and is hollowed out in a hillside on one of the main streets. The spring itself is a little below the street level, and a few stone steps lead down to it. An open space at the foot of these steps is filled, morning and evening, with women who come for water, and who unconsciously form a pretty picture in their many-hued gowns and head-dresses. Women of all ages and religions come here, from mere children, sickly-looking and grave from the worry of keeping house at an age when they ought still to be in the nursery, to wrinkled old hags who creep out to gossip with their busier neighbors. Christian women at the Fountain wear gay head-dresses and leave the face bare, while their Moslem sisters must wear *izzar* and veil.

A certain air of cleanliness and health distinguishes the women of Nazareth from those of the villages.

Only one water-jar can be filled at a time ; when it is full the bearer balances it on her head and makes way for the next comer. Sometimes a number of women reach the Fountain simultaneously; in which case quarrels or even hand-to-hand (or hand-to-hair) fights for precedence ensue. This spring is the only regular water supply Nazareth can boast, and in the autumn it becomes almost dry.

We went on to the Latin Church, a building which, though less than two hundred years old, is believed by devotees to cover several sacred places. Here, crossing the long pillared nave and passing the gaudy altar, we

went down a flight of steps into the crypt and were shown the kitchen, a room roughly hewed out of stone, and the well where Mary was working when the Holy Ghost appeared to her. The kitchen and a flight of stone stairs beyond it were found, said the obese little sacristan, when the church's foundations were dug.

We went next to the Greek Church, where we were shown another well. This, a sacristan told us, was the authentic Fountain where Mary was drawing water when the Spirit came. In the church nave we saw many pictures of this meeting. Most of them were crudely frescoed, and showed the Holy Spirit standing in the air three feet above the earth before the Virgin, Greek words issuing from the mouth of each, after the fashion of school-boy cartoons.

"In how many places did Mary live, anyway?" I asked Nasif. "This is the third Fountain we've seen already. Are there many more?"

The boy looked a little shocked as he answered: —

"No one knows the real place where her house stood. This part of the town is quite new; the old town is higher up the hill. She probably lived somewhere above this neighborhood. But such superstitions as those of the Fountain and Kitchen are needed to keep up the zeal of our native Christians. In America you are so far advanced that you need object lessons like these no longer. Here it is very different."

I think he was right; his words have since given me more patience with many things that would otherwise have seemed mere mummery.

We went through the convent of the Franciscans, after leaving the churches, and saw pictures of saints,

patriarchs, and prophets *ad lib.;* then followed Don Juan's example in

> "Turning from grisly saints and martyrs hairy
> To sweeter pictures of the Virgin Mary,"

a number of which adorn the walls of the Franciscan chapel.

We passed the day in wandering through Nazareth, one of our first visits being paid to the carpenter shops that every traveler goes to see. These are no doubt quite changed since the days of the great Carpenter of Nazareth; new implements, new furniture, and new styles of working having since come into vogue. The shops are open, and many craftsmen work in the street itself.

The Nazarene children are more like those of the Occident than any others I had seen in Syria. Most of them go to school and are made to wash. This may account for their superiority over the little peasants we had seen. As we turned a corner we met a crowd of boys running, while behind them trotted a tame gazelle that looked out of place, but quite unconcerned, on stone pavements and between lines of shops.

We stayed for several days in Nazareth, for a heavy rain-storm came up and made the Plain of Esdraelon so soft as to be impassable. Whenever it did not rain too hard, Nasif and I were out of doors, either riding over the surrounding hills, or wandering about the town. On one of our rides my guide pointed out the traditional Mount of Precipitation; the hill to whose crest the men of Nazareth, angered that a carpenter's son should speak so boldly in their synagogue, hurried

Christ when they "rose up and thrust him out of the city and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong."

That the hill now shown to travelers is the real Mount of Precipitation is impossible; for the steep hill, with its precipitous sides, is several miles east of Nazareth, and on a separate range of hills. The mountain on whose side Nazareth is built is in many places precipitous; to one of its several cliffs, in all probability, the Master was led, for no stretch of the imagination could make the distant and traditional Mount of Precipitation "the brow of the hill whereon the city was built."

Few passages in the Bible show more clearly the GOD'S sublime contempt for mere earthly might than that describing Christ's ejectment from Nazareth. Jesus, the carpenter's son, having been dragged by a mob from the synagogue to the cliff's edge, the Deity suddenly asserted Himself, and, wearied at last by their violence and obstinacy, "passing through the midst of them, went his way."

We visited, one afternoon, the home of a farmer in the lower quarter of Nazareth. The house consisted of one large room built like the stable of a khan. When we entered, the farmer's family was collected and was waiting for supper. The meal was served on the narrow platform, and on this platform the whole family, consisting of an old man and woman, their son and his wife and six children, were accustomed to sleep. On the earthen floor just below slept the live stock of the household. I made a rapid census of these, and

found there were four cows, a calf, two camels, and two donkeys. The only means of ventilation was through the wide doorway; and at night this door was closed for fear of thieves. The weather was quite warm, too. I had sometimes read of a dozen emigrants sleeping in one room in New York or London slums. But that was a mere nothing when compared to this unaired combination of stable and bedroom, where ten human beings and nine dumb animals sleep, eat, and live.

The morning before I left Nazareth, Nasif came early to the hotel and told me that a young man had died in the next street, and that the women were wailing over his body. I had wanted to see something of this sort, so I followed Nasif to the house of mourning.

I heard, as we went in, the well-known sound of the mourning chant, coming from an unfurnished front room that opened on the street. Near the door and about the walls we saw a swarm of children; the central space was filled by about fifty women kneeling and sitting on the floor around a bier. On the bier lay, with uncovered face, the body of a boy, perhaps sixteen years old, swathed in white, a white turban on his head, and a band passed under his chin. The arms lay straight at the sides, and a pair of vivid scarlet slippers stuck out incongruously from the bottom of the sheet.

One woman would sing a sentence or two in a moaning, drawling voice, and the others would chant it after her, clapping their hands. Then a moment's silence, broken only by an occasional sob, after which the first woman would sing once more, the chorus, weeping and clapping their hands, repeating her words.

The song was a panegyric on the dead boy, and was dragged on for perhaps half an hour.

Then a boy forced his way through the crowd and handed one of the women a huge bunch of some green plant like parsley. The woman took the bunch and laid sprays about the corpse's head — literally "garnishing" it. She and the rest stopped singing and gazed at the artistic bit of decoration in silent admiration.

The rudely broken quiet of death hung once more over the room. No one spoke, and through the stillness came an incessant buzz-z-z of blue flies about the dead boy's face.

At length, with a yell, the leader of the singing jumped to her feet, and, striking her hands together over her head, burst out in a new chant more dolorous than the first, hopping from one foot to the other with each word. The rest of the women rose and followed her example in word and act, each striving to outdo the others. The noise grew deafening, and clouds of dust rose under the stamping feet.

The body, garnished at the head and shod in scarlet leather, — a hideous travesty on the majesty of death, — lay stiffly in the centre of this Bedlam.

One thing alone was out of keeping with the surrounding turmoil. At the head of the corpse knelt a woman wrapped in a black robe. Throughout the whole affair she had uttered no word, nor had she so much as glanced at her fellow-mourners. Pale and still she knelt there, a look of quiet misery in her patient large eyes.

"Who is she?" I whispered to Nasif.

"The boy's mother," he answered.

She did not once turn her eyes from the boy or move, except now and then to put out her hand and smooth a stray lock of hair that had been shaken loose from under his turban. Once, when she did this, she stroked his forehead and smiled.

Seeing the smile, her singing sister stopped clapping long enough to point at her, and screamed out some words, evidently in rebuke. The fellow-singers caught up the rebuke, moaning it dolorously and shaking their heads at the offender. Then, evidently feeling that they had wasted quite enough time on such an unimportant person as the mother, they took up the song and dance once more. We left them in the thick of it, and far down the street we could hear them.

"You noticed no men were there?" said Nasif. "The men — friends of the boy's father — will come later with the priests (the family are Latins), and take the body to be buried. They will bring the coffin with them. The women will keep on singing until the men come; then they will stop. Their part will be done, for they never follow the body to the church or to the grave."

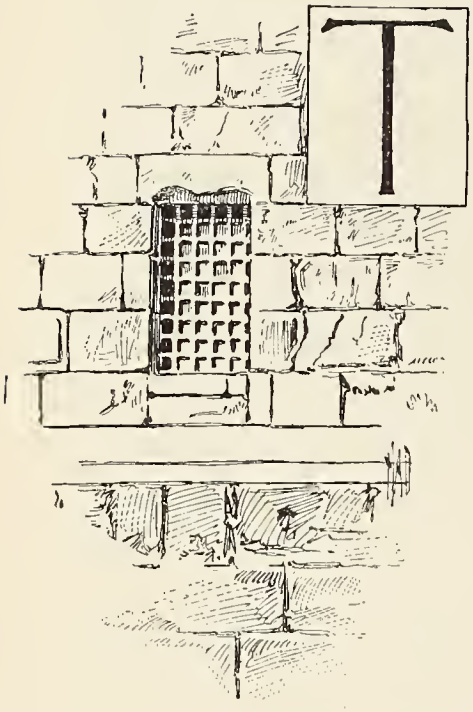
We met the procession of men a furlong or two farther on, marching solemnly through the streets, headed by three priests and a small troop of incense bearers. In the middle, an empty coffin was carried on the shoulders of four men. It was bright red, decorated with white bars and crosses. A cover of the same hue was carried under the arm of a fifth mourner. We watched them pass; and, a few moments later the mourning chant died away.

"How quiet the mother was," said Nasif, recurring to the scene among the women. "She seemed to care less than any of them."

"An Empty Coffin was carried on the Shoulders of Four Men."

CHAPTER XIX.

ESDRAELON — NAIN — JEZREEL — GIDEON'S FOUNTAIN — GILBOA.



THE rain, as I have said, held me at Nazareth longer than I had planned to stay; but rain, even in Syria, must pause sometimes, and at last a clear morning dawned. I left the hotel early, glad to be once more on the move. The train had already started on, and we followed over the hills and down into the Plain of Esdraelon. As we entered the plain we stopped and looked back. Not a cloud was left in the sky, and the air was very clear, bringing distant points unnaturally near. A strong, bracing wind kept the atmosphere from growing oppressive, and all nature seemed to share in the exhilaration that such a day, coming after a long spell of rain, is sure to bring with it. Behind us rose Mount Hermon, towering over the neighboring hills and covered from base to crown with glittering snow. The lowland rain had crystallized at that great height. Little clouds, pale pink and golden, hung about the mountain, and the white expanse was sharply defined against a background of deep blue sky.

Hermon had been lost to our sight for some days, and we hailed his reappearance, in this new and beautiful guise, with delight.

We were brought down to things earthly before we had time to weary of the sight, by coming upon the train.

The ground was muddy, the mire in many places lying so deep as to be dangerous, while here and there great cracks and fissures showed along the plain, as if an earthquake had passed by. The Jonah-like canteen-mule had chosen such a time and place to lie down and roll. As we rode up, the muleteers had just managed to get him free from the canteen-chest, which was firmly imbedded in the mud, and were standing about, discussing the situation sadly and helplessly. David got them to work once more; and at last the chest was raised from its miry resting-place. The men looked happier, and were lifting it to the mule's back, when, suddenly, the lid came off, and glass, china, tablecloths, and provisions fell in a crashing heap to the ground. I looked to see David lose his temper. An eminent clergyman has said that at one crisis or catastrophe in each man's life profanity is permissible. If this be true, David's time surely came at that moment.

To my surprise the dragoman merely pointed to the wreck, and told the men to gather it together and come on as soon as they could; then he rode on with me as though nothing had happened. Considering that more than a third of his crockery was broken, his tablecloths and napkins covered with mud, and his canteen lid unhinged, this struck me as rather good breeding.

As we left the scene of the disaster I noticed a dog

running beside us. David said he had followed us from Nazareth and would probably stay with us until we reached Jerusalem The dog regarded himself henceforth as a privileged member of the party, barking at any strangers we chanced to meet, and issuing an "all-comers" challenge to every stray cur on the road.

We kept to the plain all that morning. To our left we could see Mount Tabor rising like the back of a gigantic turtle from the level ground about it. Tabor was once believed to be the Mount of Transfiguration, but the tradition, like most others, is unfounded. It is not probable that Christ, leaving Cæsarea Philippi, would have journeyed so far for such a purpose when many mountains lay nearer at hand, nor do we read of His visiting Mount Tabor at any time during His ministry. Moreover, the summit of Tabor was at that time occupied by a Roman garrison. The place has, however, other associations. From it came Barak and his ten thousand men, urged on by Deborah. He crossed the plain, passing perhaps the very spot where we were now standing, to engage with the man who for "twenty years had mightily oppressed Israel," and who now, on the opposite side of the valley, opposed him with a great army and "nine hundred chariots of iron." Through the narrow gorge between two mountains just beyond the scene of their battle, Sisera fled; and somewhere on the plateau above, the tent of Jael must have stood.

"Sisera had had a long run before he reached Jael's tent," remarked David as he showed me these places. "And he needed rest. Jael was praised for killing him, but really it doesn't seem a very worthy act to murder a beaten man when he is 'fast asleep and

weary'; especially since she herself had invited him to stop and rest."

The ancients evidently had no such scruples, for Jael was blessed and her deed set forth in Deborah's song.

Passing on we skirted a slope of the Hill Mizar, and saw the village of Nain, where the widow's son was brought back to life. The place was doubtless much the same in our Lord's time as it is to-day, neither better nor worse than a hundred other hill villages along the route.

A short distance beyond Nain is Shunem, where I was shown a house said to be the same in which "a little chamber in the wall" was built for the Prophet Elisha. The house is now a square stone ruin, and is used as a guest-house for pilgrims. We saw a flashily dressed man breakfasting in the doorway, while a score of villagers waited at a respectful distance until he should finish. This man was tax-collector for the district, which accounted for the respect shown him.

The fields about Shunem are still used for farming as much as at the time when the Shunammite woman's son went out to watch the reapers and was sunstruck. Sunstroke is not uncommon in this shadeless plain.

We traversed fields where men were guiding primitive plows drawn sometimes by a cow, sometimes by a camel, but oftenest by a bullock and a donkey yoked together. Other fellaheen came behind, sowing; holding the grain in bags formed by gathering up the front of their white gowns.

At noon we halted at the foot of a low hill that forms the site of Jezreel. On the top of this hill still stand the ruins of Ahab's Watch Tower; the tower from

which the warder saw "a company" and a fast driven chariot, "like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi, for he driveth furiously."

Fellah sowing Grain.

On the stony green space before us once stood Naboth's vineyard. It is half covered now by a marshy pool, where we saw women washing clothes and beating them against the rocks, or spreading them on the hillside to dry.

After lunch we turned from our course to visit the fountain where Gideon's three hundred chosen men "every one lapped water with his tongue as a dog lappeth." The fountain springs from under a steep rock in the hillside, and forms a pond about fifty yards across. The lower end of the pond is filled with rushes, and the center is only two or three feet deep. I dismounted and drank, — not "lapping as a dog lappeth," however, — before going back.

Before us in the plain the Midianites had encamped,

and over the rolling country to the right, Gideon had followed them, "faint, yet pursuing."

He was a shrewd and systematic man, this conqueror of the Midianites. First, he required full and repeated proofs of the Lord's willingness to help him, before he stirred hand or foot in the venture; afterward, as different cities refused him aid, he promised a separate punishment to each, and on his return kept his promises to the letter. From Gideon's Fountain we rode toward Jenin, where we were to encamp. In the middle of the afternoon we passed several large, stony hills, the nearest standing out, bleak and rugged, from the rest. This is Gilboa, and here it was that Saul, hemmed in on all sides by his enemies, made his last stand. A small valley lies between Gilboa and another hill to the north. On the side of this second hill is the village of Endor. Over the valley and up the mountain-side to the village went the old king secretly and at night (priests, visions, and even the magic stone having failed him), as a last resort, to seek counsel from a witch. Somewhere in that straggling clump of mud-huts he heard his doom pronounced from the lips of the long-dead Samuel. Not being gifted, like his successor, in the art of lamenting his fate in psalms, or writing metrical imprecations on his enemies, the king simply went back to his army, and, though knowing well how the battle must end, fought bravely and "died, his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men with him."

He was in disgrace with Heaven, — perhaps deservedly, — but his end was surely more glorious than David's. There is something pitiable in the description of the Psalmist's last days; his dying advice to Solomon

to kill such enemies as he, the father, dared not put out of the way; and his knowledge that his sons and captains had not even waited for him to die before quarreling over the crown. The less godly king who, having fought his last fight, fell on his sword to avoid capture and disgrace, chose at all events a more picturesque exit from the world.

We raced with a rainstorm after leaving Gilboa, and reached our camp near Jenin barely two minutes ahead of it. We camped in a valley between two low hills. One of the two, almost bare of houses, was divided into fields by high cactus hedges. On the other stood the garrison town of Jenin.

Through the blinding rain came two commissionaires from the barracks to examine my *tezkeré*, or passport. This was the first time since leaving Damascus that it had been demanded, and David was indignant.

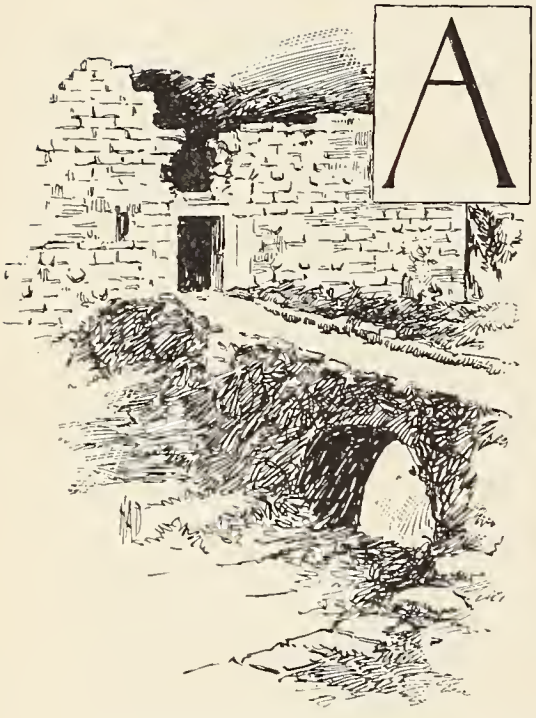
The officer, who showed by his thoroughness that he was new to the business, read the description of me on the passport, staring at my face to make sure of each detail. One point greatly puzzled him. I was described on the *tezkeré* as clean-shaven, while, as he complained to David, I had a full beard. The possibility that the beard might have grown since I left America never entered his mind. At length we half-appeased him and he took his leave, still looking back now and then suspiciously at the camp.

Our new acquisition, the dog, earned his board by barking outside of my tent most of the night, and then growling at me when I came out in the morning. He evidently had high, if undiscriminating, ideas of his duty as guard.

Two mounted soldiers followed us through the town, next day, and saw us well on our road. David thought that they were still in doubt as to our characters and intentions and wanted to make sure that we meant no harm to their city. Through all my travels this was the only place where I met with the least espionage or incivility from officials.

CHAPTER XX.

JENIN — SAMARIA — NABLOUS.



AS we rode along the narrow river beyond Jenin we came upon an odd structure that at first sight looked like an Indian wigwam. A single vine had grown or had been twined into the exact shape of a small tent, the broad, close-growing leaves forming perfect shelter alike from sun and from rain. An opening had been trimmed out near the ground, for a doorway.

"We see a good many of these vine-huts in Syria," said David as we went on. "They grow from a single root and make good houses for poor people, besides giving them fruit."

"What sort of fruit?"

"Gourds. This was undoubtedly the kind of gourd that served Jonah for a house, and that was killed by a worm at the root. Most foreigners think that Jonah's gourd was a tree, and that he lived under the shade."

We passed a large modern village and rode for an hour through the olive orchards that lie around it. The olives were ripe and bands of children with long poles

and baskets gathered them. The Syrian olives are not like those found in Italy and Greece, but are smaller and almost black. They are pickled in such a way as to make them retain their sharp, astringent taste, and though in this form they are an important item of native diet, few foreigners care for them.

The olive-grove was deeply shaded, and we rode through it slowly. At last, coming once more to the open, we re-entered the bare Plain of Esdraelon near the spot where in 1799 Napoleon won his great victory over the Turks, routing, with twenty-one thousand French troops, the Turkish army of twenty-five thousand.

This Plain of Esdraelon, desolate and wind-swept in winter, a mass of swaying wild flowers in spring, is, to me, one of the most interesting places in the East. Over it all the heroes and prophets of the Bible, and even the Master Himself traveled. It has been for ages the battle-ground of Syria. Egyptians and Phœnicians, Israelites, Philistines, Romans, Saracens, Mohammedans, and French all have fought here. Its villages and mountains are almost all associated with sacred incidents.

We reached Dothan before noon. Here, at the foot of an olive and fig clad mountain stands a stone mill entered through a broad courtyard. When we dismounted, the yard was full of farmers waiting with donkeys and empty sacks for their meal to be ground, or else filling baskets and fastening them on the backs of kneeling camels.

A group of bare-legged Bedouins, some with guns and spears, others with crooked knives stuck in their belts, sat on a low, stone wall. Their lean, Arab horses

stood tethered in the shade of the mill. We went into the cool, dark building, drawn by the plash of water as it fell from the great wheel.

"This well," said David, "is the one where we Christians believe Joseph was placed by his brethren. Joseph had been looking for them in the plain about Shechem (that is Nablous), when a man told him they had gone on to Dothan. The Bible says he found them at Dothan, and that they threw him into an empty pit that was there. This is the only pit or well of any size, hereabouts. Then, again, the route from Gilead to Egypt goes past here, and you may remember Joseph was sold to a company of Ishmaelites who were carrying spices from Gilead to the land of Egypt."

I could see, through the broad doorway, the group of modern Ishmaelites lounging on the courtyard wall, and I fancied the same sight may have met Joseph's eyes as he was lifted to earth to be sold.

The mill to-day is patronized by all the farmers of the surrounding country; the wheel is worked on the most primitive style, earthen jars being bound by a thong to the end of each spoke. These go down empty and come up full.

One end of the building is used as a khan, and at this end, his swarthy face and red tarbusch whitened in streaks by meal, stood the miller himself, bargaining with the Sheik of the Bedouins.

We lunched on the plain some miles beyond Dothan, and soon afterward came to rising ground. For two hours or more we rode upward over a steep and stony mountain, where in many places no path existed. The horses were often forced to step from boulder to boulder, or

to walk between stones where each step must be carefully chosen, and where the least stumble might mean a broken leg or neck.

Massoud put aside all tricks and settled down to work, walking with ears forward, taking each step as carefully and daintily as if he were going through a species of dance.

Halfway up the mountain we were forced to pass through the most malodorous and altogether revolting village I ever visited. I wrapped my kafieh over my face to shut out part of the sights and smells; and even David pulled hard at his cigarette. The inhabitants, as filthy as their own village, ran out to stare at us, and, but for our riding-whips, would have stopped us for backsheesh.

When we got beyond the place, and life became more bearable, David remarked: —

"That is a horrible village to go through; but there is no safe road around it. When I was traveling with Dr. ——" (naming the hero of the Mejdel es Shems and Galilee adventures) "we were going from Jerusalem to Nazareth, so we had to come down this mountain instead of climbing it. The Doctor is a heavy man, and the mountain is steep; just before we reached the village he said he was afraid his horse would stumble with such a weight on his back, and he thought it would be better to go down the rest of the way on foot. The others dismounted and walked with him. By the time they got halfway through that village the ladies had nearly fainted. It was two or three days before they got over the effects of it."

"How about the Doctor?"

"Oh, he had a bad cold in his head, and he is very near-sighted, so he didn't mind it much."

The mountain grew less rugged as we neared the top. We came to an orchard of misshapen fig-trees, with a flock of black goats feeding on the low branches. Our dog charged into the flock, scattering the goats to every side; then started in pursuit of a kid who had run over the crest of the mountain. The shepherd howled at the dog and ran after him. We galloped our tired horses after the shepherd, and had reached the summit before the dog could be persuaded to come back. Then, for the first time, I stopped and looked about me.

To the north Hermon once more appeared, white and gleaming above the brown foothills; before and around us stretched the Plain of Esdraelon; and to the west, over a cluster of low irregular peaks, lay the blue Mediterranean. I had not seen the ocean since the day I left Beirût, and now it seemed a link between me and the old world I had left so far behind.

"Many travelers say that, sir," answered David when I mentioned this. "All Europeans that travel this way stop and gaze out to sea, as if they thought they could look across to the other side if they tried long enough. I suppose they feel that they are passing through a strange land and it is good to see something they have known before. I had a party of thirteen American ladies traveling with me once, and when we got to the top of this mountain I explained to them what each place they saw was, and they always said 'yes,' whenever I asked if they saw the place I meant. I was sure they didn't really see half of the things, so I thought I would test them. I pointed far out to sea, and asked

them if they saw that spot in the distance. They all said they did, and I asked them again — 'You are sure, ladies, you all see it?' They said they did, and asked what it was.

"Well, ladies," I said, "that is *New York!*"

Riding on, we came to the ancient site of Samaria, three-quarters of the way up a hill. At the top of

SITE OF ANCIENT SAMARIA.

this hill once stood Ahab's ivory palace, and in the plain beneath the Syrian army had encamped when Samaria was besieged. Down the road by which we climbed the hill, had crept the four lepers who, starved in Samaria, had resolved to throw themselves on the mercy of their enemies. Here and there on the hill-side I saw a bit of pillar or a broken sarcophagus

cropping out from the ground, marking the burial-places of the great men of Samaria. Treasures of gold, silver, and jewels, to say nothing of myriads of curios, may still be hidden under the earth of this hillside. If such wealth does exist, as there is much reason to believe, it must continue to remain buried, for it is a dangerous thing to find treasure in Turkish countries, and no native will take so great a risk.

Ruins of Market-Place of Ancient Samaria.

We reached a plateau on which the market-place of Samaria was built. A long double line of gray columns, some broken, many still intact, stands to this day to mark the spot. Brambles, bushes, and rough brown grass cover the ground and, save for vultures circling far above, and a thin, mangy donkey looking for pasturage among the briars, I saw no signs of life. It was a veritable city of the dead. Yet in

its glory, the rich metropolis, the pillared market-place, and, capping all, the great white palace of ivory, must have formed a prize well worth the endless wars waged for its possession.

We rode between the lines of columns, now and then turning aside to avoid some finely-carved fragment that lay in our path, and in a few minutes came to the modern town of Samaria — as it is now called, Sebaste. This is utterly different from the ancient city, and is quite uninteresting. Near it is the pool where Ahab's chariot is said to have been washed, and on the outskirts is a Crusader church — the Church of John the Baptist — now turned into a mosque. We saw some women baking bread in a public oven and others grinding corn, and I dismounted to watch them.

A mud hut encloses the oven. The dough is laid on a layer of flat stones to be baked. The stones are covered with fuel, such as chaff and thorns, which is never allowed to go out, but is kept smouldering continuously night and day. Hence the Biblical metaphor of chaff thrown into the everlasting or undying fire.

Corn is ground between two flat mill-stones. A double handle is attached to the upper stone and is turned by two women. This mode of flour-making is also mentioned in the Bible: "Two women shall be grinding together."

Going down into the plain, we entered the fairest valley in Syria — the valley of Shechem. It lies between high hills whose lower slopes are covered with olive-trees and grain; a brook runs through the middle, and the farther end of the vista is closed by the

blue ribbon of the Mediterranean. A hazy light from the setting sun filled all the valley as we rode into it. A stone bridge spanned the brook, and green banks ran down on either side to the very edge of the water. Bridge, brook, and grass combined to form a picture that looked like a section of Devonshire scenery. Crossing the brook and riding along the highroad for a mile, we reached the town of Nablous just as darkness closed in.

Street Loafers in Nablous.

CHAPTER XXI.

JOSEPH'S TOMB — JACOB'S WELL — ROBBER'S VALLEY — BETHEL.

THE tents had become soaked through during our rainy night at Jenin, and by some accident — probably a misunderstanding between the canteen-mule and his burden — the train was some hours behind us. Night had already fallen, so David sent our horses on to the khan under Serkeese's charge, and took me to the house of the Protestant missionary at Nablous.

The Mission House had once been a pasha's palace, and stood on high ground at the entrance to the town. The Reverend Mr. El Karry (a native Syrian educated in England) who superintended the mission, was an old friend of David's. He received us cordially and insisted on our

spending the night in his house. This I was glad enough to do, and I thoroughly enjoyed the change from wet tents to the large comfortable guest-room with a fire burning on the hearth. Dinner over, Mr. El Karry invited me to spend the evening with his family. He had married an Englishwoman, who, with her sister, helped him in his mission work. It was an incongruous yet pleasant experience in a country where for weeks I had seen none of my own race or language, to pass an hour or two in a middle-class "sitting-room," talking with two Englishwomen. There was a stove in the room stamped with the trade-mark of a New York firm, and before it slept a very Occidental-looking lap-dog and a cat.

When I was about to say "good-night," Mr. El Karry observed, —

"We always finish the evening with family prayers. Would you care to join us?"

I stayed willingly; after prayers, a hymn was proposed. The missionary turned to me and asked, —

"Do you sing?"

I replied that I did not. He asked the same question of David, who, though he has a really fine voice, was too polite to sing when I had said I could not, and therefore answered in the negative.

Mr. El Karry looked reproachfully at us for a moment; with something of triumph in his eye, turned over several pages of the hymn-book; then, glancing once more at his non-singing guests, read with due emphasis these lines: —

"Let those refuse to sing
Who never knew the Lord.
But" — (with a look at his own family)
"Children of the Heavenly King
All join in sweet accord."

Whether his choice of this hymn was intentional or merely chance, I do not know. I have read a similar story elsewhere, but I can vouch for the truth of my own experience. David and I felt quite like outcasts while the singing lasted.

Nablous was even more beautiful at sunrise next morning than as we had seen it the previous day. Small wonder that the ancient conquerors of Palestine were reminded of their own country, and named the place "Neapolis," — whence springs the corruption, "Nablous." From the Mission House terrace we could see on one hand the green valley and hills, with the Mediterranean beyond; the mountain we had crossed on our way to Nablous wore a roseate tint from the rising sun; and beneath us, with its white domes and minarets, lay the town itself.

Two higher mountains stood, one on each side of the valley, a short distance to the east. These were Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. Here Joshua gathered the people of Israel, six tribes on each mountain. Curses were read, one by one, by priests from Mount Ebal; and after each curse the whole host shouted "Amen!" Blessings were then read from Mount Gerizim and again the people shouted, "Amen!" The "Amens" of that great multitude must have re-echoed for miles among the hills, and far out to sea.

It is noticeable, that while the list of curses fills twelve verses of the Bible, the blessings are all numbered in four. There has always been more scope for language in a curse than in a blessing.

"Thou shalt put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal."

It is a meaningless, but none the less amusing, fact that while Mount Gerizim the blessed, is bare and rocky even unto to-day, Mount Ebal's heavily cursed slopes are verdant with crops and olive orchards.

Saying "good-bye" to the missionary, we passed through Nablous and came to Joseph's tomb. This tomb is in a mausoleum close to a little mosque. No doubt can be raised as to the genuineness of the alleged resting-place of the Patriarch's bones, and the land about it is undoubtedly the "parcel of ground" bought by Jacob. Pillars at the head and foot of the tomb are topped by charred receptacles in which Jews have for ages burned ornaments, lace, etc., in memory of their Patriarch.

Less than half a mile beyond is a large enclosure with a stone hedge at its entrance. In the enclosure is Jacob's Well. The well has been lately excavated and a flight of several steps with pillars at each side was found leading down to its mouth. The place is interesting solely from the fact that it was the scene of Christ's talk with the Samaritan woman. It was probably on these very steps that Our Lord, His disciples having gone to the city to buy meat, sat, when tired and thirsting, he asked a woman to give him drink. Shadowing them was Mount Gerizim, crowned with the great synagogue whose ruins are still standing; — the synagogue referred to in the words "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain."

The well is dry much of the time, as are many water supplies in the neighborhood. This may account for the eagerness the native woman showed to taste of the magic water which would "spring up into everlasting life," and whose possessor would thirst no more.

The scenery about Jacob's well — hills, synagogue, and valley, even to the town behind — is, I imagine, almost exactly as Christ saw it. The broad plain we faced on leaving the well, was perhaps that over which He looked when He saw the fields "white already to the harvest."

"This plain we are coming to now," said David, "is called the Wandering Field of Joseph. It was here that Joseph wandered about in search of his brethren until he was sent on to Dothan."

We turned to the right on entering the plain, and rode southward. We had sent some of the luggage ahead, and had left the tents to follow at leisure; for, being anxious to reach Jerusalem as soon as possible, we had made plans to ride faster than usual and to spend the night at a monastery.

Early in the afternoon we passed Lebonah, a village at the base of a mountain. It was from this village that the women came into the plain to dance; and from the gorge to the left, behind which stood the town vineyards, the Benjamites issued "and took them wives, according to their number, of them that danced, whom they caught."

Toward sunset we came to a long, narrow defile with cliffs and steep hills on either side. The narrow path through the bottom is filled with stones, and at the sides grow straggling olive-trees, that catch the kafieh and tear the face of the rider.

"This is the Robbers' Valley," said David. "Some years ago people hardly ever went through here without being stopped and robbed."

"Are there any robbers here now?"

"Once in a while, but the government has put down

most of them. It is getting dark, though, and there is no chance of galloping our horses if we should be attacked, so you would better have your pistol ready."

We loosened our pistols in the holsters, and rode on; while Serkeese, behind us, half drew the sword I had bought from the Bedouin, and tried to look fierce. I noticed he had stopped singing, and that once when his horse stumbled, he forgot to whoop at him.

The sun had set, and the moon, rising over a ridge above us, gave the valley a spectral look, distorting and vivifying rocks, shadows, and branches. The scene reminded me of the Valley of Temptation in *Sintram*.

I should enjoy describing here how a horde of dark-faced banditti rose from among the boulders and attacked us; how we valiantly withstood them, and how successfully I emulated the noble examples set by heroes of Arab war-songs in defeating the whole tribe — but in reality nothing of the sort happened. So many travelers I meet recount to me wild adventures *quorum magnae partes fuerunt*, that I am half-ashamed — although more than half-glad — to admit that I was not once, during my trip, in any imminent danger. A man who rode along through the same valley a month earlier was fired on, and some time afterward a small party was "held up" and robbed; but the robbers, if indeed any were near, treated us with utter indifference.

The Robbers' Fountain, a picturesque spot, deriving its name from the former rulers of the neighborhood, is the only object of special interest in the valley.

We emerged at last into the open hill-country. At the end of the ravine we passed the camp of a Latin

priest who, with a fair parishioner (she, after the manner of fair and wealthy parishioners, paying the man of God's expenses on the trip), was making a tour of Palestine. We had missed the ubiquitous dog for some hours, and now found him installed as self-appointed guardian of this camp, whence he barked fiercely at us as we passed.

Mountain riding, over precipitous Syrian hills by moonlight, is not unalloyed pleasure, as there is always a more than even chance that your horse will fall, or get his foot wedged between two rocks. We kept on, stumbling and feeling our way in the bright but deceptive moonlight, for an hour or more. Then we came to a hill that stood by itself, rugged and lonely, innumerable boulders showing dull gray under the moon.

On this hill the wanderer, overtaken by darkness in his flight from his father's house, had thrown himself down to rest. Here, his head resting possibly on one of the very rocks over which our horses now stumbled, he had slept the heavy sleep of sorrow and fatigue. The moon may have shone on his face as it shone on the hill, now, and its unexplained influence perhaps caused the dream wherein he saw the "ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it." Stranger and more vivid dreams have been caused by sleeping in the moonlight since the Patriarch's night in the wilderness.

"This is Bethel," said David; "the town beyond still goes by that name among many people, though the modern name is Luz. It has about three hundred inhabitants. There are fine ruins near here that are

not very well known; if it were daylight we might stop and see them."

I once read in a religious paper a description of Jacob's flight. The author laid much stress on the self-abasement and humility that led the wanderer to choose a stone for his pillow. In reality, I fancy Jacob would have been puzzled to find, at Bethel or anywhere in its vicinity, three feet of ground where he could lie without resting on a stone.

We watered our horses near by at a well-known Fountain of the Sparrows. The fountain is hollowed out of the rock and forms a nightly resting-place for numbers of birds. These flew out as we drew near, and three of them — fluffy little owls as large as a man's fist — settled down on the arch above us, hooting plaintively at being disturbed. Riding on, past hillside tombs and a few lonely huts, we reached our destination — Ramulah (or Ramah in Benjamin) — about nine o'clock in the evening.

CHAPTER XXII.

NIGHT IN A MONASTERY — BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF JERUSALEM.

RAMULAH is a small town, containing, besides the regular native houses, a nunnery, a Protestant school managed by an American Quakeress, and a Latin monastery.

We stopped at the monastery, where Imbarak and John soon joined us. David took me down a long paved and vaulted corridor, then up a flight of stone steps, past several gowned and cowled brothers, to the room of the Father Superior. Here we found four or five monks, two of whom were guests like ourselves. The Superior, a plump little man, whose face was adorned with a curly black beard, invited me to sit with him while David went to make preparations for my dinner.

I sat on the sofa beside one of the guests, — a tall lean monk with humorous eyes and mouth, and a shrewd face deeply furrowed, as if by care or illness. Both he and the Superior spoke good French. As I sat down he offered me snuff from a flat horn box with a crucifix engraved on it, and accepted one of my ciga-

rettes in return. I have more than once had occasion to be glad that I long ago learned how to take snuff, for, while the habit is fortunately obsolete among westerners, it is still common in the Orient.

After this exchange of commodities, which is perhaps the most auspicious way of opening an acquaintance, the lean brother asked me if I had been to Italy; and, delighted to hear that I had, began a long eulogy on the beauty and historic interest of his own birthplace, Turin, — a decidedly prosaic place to my mind, — which, he declared, combined the advantages of Rome and Venice without the malaria of the one and the dampness of the other.

He was interrupted by the Superior, who asked me abruptly what my religion and country might be. I told him, and he asked whether there were more Catholics or Protestants in America. I said most of our Italian, French, and Irish citizens were Romanists; upon which he exclaimed in triumph, —

"And I am told that these foreigners make up almost your whole population! Therefore America is, without question, of the true Faith."

He turned to a pale young brother who sat in the corner and translated the news to him in Arabic. The young monk raised his eyes to the ceiling in holy joy, and the Superior was about to renew the talk when he was interrupted by the Italian brother, who leaned toward me with a wink, and said in English, —

"Yes? Good morning! If you please! Damn!"

I was surprised to hear this string of expressions in my own tongue, and still more so at hearing the pleasantly uttered curse. After looking about in pride at

his own linguistic power, and noting the effect on the other brethren, the holy man relapsed into French and said complacently, —

"I have met Englishmen and Americans before, and, as you observe, I have learned a little of their language. What I just said is one of your forms of greeting, is it not?"

I would not undeceive him, but contented myself with complimenting his accent.

The Superior asked how far I had traveled that day. I answered that I had come from Nablous; and then spoke of the beauty of the place. The Superior flared up instantly and cried, —

"How can you, a Christian, find beauty in such a town? Do you not know that nearly every man in Nablous is a Mohammedan?"

This speech reminded me of a man who once came up and spoke to me while I was looking at a Crusader church that was in process of changing into a mosque.

"See," he had said, "how we have broken down your place of worship and raised our own dome over the high altar itself."

I wished at this moment that my Moslem acquaintance and the pious Father could have been closeted together for an hour, to discuss religion. The Kilkenny cats of Hibernian memory would sink into deserved insignificance by comparison.

I sat for some time, a delighted guest, dividing my attention between the religious remarks of the Superior and the slightly irreligious anecdotes of the Italian brother; agreeing with one, and laughing with the other. The wind blew a regular hurricane against the

stone walls outside; while within, a great open fire roared up the chimney, flickering on the brown-robed forms of the monks and on the giant crucifix on the opposite wall, and filling the room with a heat which, if too strong, was at least a welcome change from the cold ride I had so lately taken.

I was quite sorry when the shadowy Imbarak appeared with the announcement that dinner was served.

It was the evening of my birthday, and David, having somehow discovered the fact, had ransacked the place for materials "to give me," as he expressed it, "such a dinner as should make me glad I had lived until this birthday." He also told me that he had threatened John with dire penalties in case I was not pleased with the repast.

"I have read that they have birthday dinners in America, sir," he ended, "and I thought perhaps this would make you feel a little as if you were at home."

I had not eaten since noon, and as it was now late in the evening I was nearly famished, so I did ample justice to the spread, not finishing until midnight. I do not remember all the menu or the order in which things came. I know there were soup, fish, chicken, game, a *vol au vent*, several native dishes, a ragout, then — crowning glory — an English plum pudding, ablaze with lighted brandy; "Turkish delight," crystallized citron, two or three kinds of wine, and, last of all, the regulation black coffee and cigarettes.

Such a meal, on the Gargantuan style in which I helped myself to everything, would at any other time have caused many and awful visions to disturb my rest; but I found no unpleasant effects this night, and, on

retiring to the comfortable room the Superior had given me, enjoyed, despite my excesses in the eating line, the slumber usually reserved for the just.

At dawn the next morning David knocked at my door.

"Will you look out of your window, sir?" he called. "Not the one toward the sea, but the other. There has been a funeral, and the mourners are coming back."

"This is the most mortuary country I ever struck," I growled, in disgust at being wakened so early. "One can't travel a mile without running up against a funeral or a house of mourning, or something of the sort."

The view from the window repaid me for my trouble in rising. A sheet of fog lay over the sea, and white mists, tinged here and there to amber, clung about the nearer hilltops. The wind had died down in the night, and was replaced by a still cold that chilled me through.

Fifty paces from my window was a graveyard. About one of the graves stood a group of peasants, while half a dozen more were leaving the place, groaning perfunctorily from time to time. The mourners dropped off, one by one, while we watched, and at last the group diminished to four women, — the wife of the deceased and three of her friends. A spirited scene took place among the quartet, the wife declaring she would lie on her husband's grave until she too was dead, and her friends trying by all arts to persuade her to come away with them.

"Does she mean what she says, about lying on her husband's grave?" I asked, interested in this hint at suttee customs.

"It is customary for widows to say that, sir," answered the dragoman.

The three friends, after long persuasion and a little physical force, succeeded in getting the widow away, and she passed under our window on the road home. When she was directly beneath I noticed for the first time that her head was bleeding, and that in each hand she held a thick braid of her own hair. I had heard of the Eastern custom of tearing out the hair from grief, but had always thought it figurative.

Turning back into the room, I found the Superior at my elbow, wishing me good morning and asking how I had slept.

He had spoken the night before of the difficulty of finding instructive reading in this lonely town; so, when I said "good-bye" I gave him my copy of Murger's *Vie de Bohéme*. This is one of the most delightful books of my acquaintance and is my prime favorite, but — had I thought a moment — is scarcely a volume that I should recommend for the study of a brotherhood of holy men.

The Italian brother, who came in just as I was giving the book, praised it highly and said it was most instructive reading. I am morally certain that he had never seen it or even heard of it before, but that he merely wished to show me he was familiar with French literature; however, his praise decided the Superior, who accepted the gift with many thanks, and announced that he expected to begin reading it that very morning.

Whether he ever read Murger's masterpiece to the end, I cannot say. That, after reading it, he put it in the monastery library for the edification of his col-

leagues is more than doubtful. In any case it may have given recreation and one or two broader ideas to his intolerant ascetic mind. If it did, I surely deserve a vote of thanks from the brethren. I have often wondered as to the book's fate.

The morning was still very cold when we set out. We passed Mizpeh, where all Israel once gathered by Samuel's orders, for formal repentance; then, on by a Roman khan that was once the headquarters of a band of robbers; and at length began to climb Mount Scopus, the highest point in Judea. As we rode higher the cold became more intense. The air was little colder, I suppose, than on a late autumn morning at home; but having become used to the Syrian heat, I felt the change far more keenly. At the summit of Scopus we looked down on the city beyond. We saw a town, small in expanse, but so crowded with houses that in many places it overflowed its walls, and spread in large settlements without the gates. It lay among low hills, and was itself built on a steep hill that, beyond the walls, ran down on the east to a dried brook. At the other side of this brook rose a second and higher mountain, whose gray slopes were partly covered with groves of olive, and whose summit was capped by a tall white tower. Outside the northern gate, — between us and the city, — was an oddly shaped little hill whose fresh verdure, contrasted with the dull-hued land about it, reminded me at once of the old lines, —

> "There is a green hill far away,
> Without a city wall."

The hill was "the place Golgotha, which is, being in-

terpreted, the place of a skull." The crowded, dingy-looking town beyond it was "Jerusalem, the city of the great King," and the tower-capped mountain to the east, separated from Jerusalem by the Brook Kedron, was the Mount of Olives.

At the foot of Olivet I saw an enclosed garden; here is the generally accepted site of Gethsemane. On the other side of the mountain I could see a small part of the village of Bethany.

We cantered our horses down the rough slope of Scopus into the plain beneath, toward Jerusalem and civilization. A short ride brought us to the Jaffa gate. Here, catching sight of some passing tourists, I realized for the first time that my clothes were torn by briars, rain-soaked and stained with mud, that my face was tanned like a native's, and my beard was long and untrimmed; also that a kafieh is perhaps not the most natural head-dress for an American to wear. In this guise, however, I was forced to ride into the Holy City, — hoping devoutly that any passers-by would be charitable enough to mistake me for nothing worse than an Arab tramp, — and came to the New Grand Hotel, which was henceforth to be my headquarters, and where my luggage containing more presentable clothes awaited me.

JAFFA GATE: ENTRANCE TO JERUSALEM.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JERUSALEM CRANKS — JEWISH WAILING PLACE — HOLY CITY BY MOONLIGHT.

I SHOULD like, were such a thing possible in an account of Palestine, to avoid writing of Jerusalem.

The Holy City is to a Bible student the most interesting place on earth, and a separate volume would be required if I should attempt to enter fully into all descriptions and impressions.

Thomson, Geikie, Merrill, and a number of lesser lights, have written on the subject with far deeper knowledge than I possess; and as every reader who is at all interested in such things has no doubt already studied one or more of these writers, I shall content myself with simply touching here and there on such points as seemed most interesting to me, an unlearned outsider.

In the first place, Jerusalem is the Mecca of all sorts and conditions of cranks. When a man (or more often a woman) starts to ride some religious hobby, that hobby's head is almost invariably turned toward Jerusalem.

Here we find the crank who wishes to buy Calvary

and build a theological seminary there; here, the crank who, newly converted to Romanism, rushes to the Holy City for evidences of early Christianity, and thereby earns from the ungodly the title of "Saint Chaser"; here, again, are the innumerable Hebrew cranks who believe from certain signs that the coming of their Messiah is at hand, and have journeyed to Jerusalem to await the event, living in the interim a hand-to-mouth existence in a collection of shanties and "lean-tos" known, because of the materials of which it is built, as the "Box Colony."

Another band of cranks have followed a woman who claims to be their prophetess, and live together in Jerusalem as a free-love community, believing that none of them shall see death until Christ comes. The fact that several of the band have died during the past few years does not seem to weaken their faith.

I could go on enumerating the noble army of cranks gathered here for pages if necessary.

To a casual looker-on there is something revolting, as well as ridiculous, in the knowledge that the life and promises of Our Lord have become so perverted by fanatics as to make our Great Religion the laughing-stock of Moslems and atheists throughout the East.

The least objectionable crank I met in Jerusalem was an old Yankee farmer with a broad New England accent. He has bought a farm on the outskirts of the city and works it on true New Hampshire principles, with the idea that he can make at least his own share of Palestine fulfill Scriptural prophecy and "blossom like the rose." Up to the time of writing, the rose

has not come into bloom, but the Yankee is still hopeful.

Cranks, as well as other tourists, have poured in more rapidly of late, since the Jerusalem and Jaffa railway has brought the "Cranks' Mecca" within three hours' journey of the sea-coast. Isaiah prophesied that men should come to Jerusalem "out of all nations, upon horses, in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon *swift beasts*." The expression "swift beasts," says one commentator, may be also translated from the original Hebrew as "swaying furnaces." This term, if the translation be true, is not a bad definition of locomotive.

The New Grand Hotel, where I stopped, is by all odds the best caravanserai in Syria. The manager, M. Gelat, has made a study of European hotels, and modeled his own after them.

Just across the street from the Grand is the Tower of David, built of dark-gray stone, with a turret that rises above the main building. This is mentioned in Solomon's Song as "the tower of David, builded for an armory, whereon hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men." It is now used as barracks for the Turkish garrison, as is the traditional house of Pilate.

We reached Jerusalem on Friday noon, and after luncheon David took me down to the foundation-wall of the temple near Robinson's Arch, — to the "Jews' Wailing Place." A horde of Jews, old men and women for the most part, gather here every Friday afternoon to read passages of Scripture and to bemoan the fall of their nation.

When, after winding down through dirty alleys and byways, we reached the spot, we found a number of the chosen people already on the ground. Many stood

JEWS' WAILING PLACE.

groaning or weeping in a line before the high wall. Here and there groups had formed surrounding a man who read in a sing-song, whining tone a psalm or prophecy,

his audience repeating part of the text after him amid sympathetic lamentations. Two or three isolated mourners sat on the stone pavement, some reading in silence, others rocking back and forth in a perfect *abandon* of woe. The tears were genuine and, as a rule, copious. I envied the wailers their ability to go about bargaining, cheating, and making merry all the week, and then, on the seventh afternoon, to lay off all earthly matters and weep piteously for hours at a time. I suppose, though, when one gets well into the habit, it is quite easy.

Nails and spikes of all sizes, shapes, and ages were stuck into the interstices of the wall.

"That means, sir," explained David, "that each man who drives a nail there wishes that he may have even so small a place in the kingdom of Heaven as his nail takes up in this wall."

As he spoke I remembered an old proverb of the East which seemed more in accordance with the Hebraic character than was the modest wish repeated by David, as well as a more probable reason for the presence of the nails: "As a nail sticketh between the joinings of the stones, so doth sin stick close between buying and selling."

"How long have they kept up this sort of thing?" I asked, pointing to the line of mumbling and sobbing devotees.

"For ages, sir. They chose this place for their wailing because it is near their former temple. None of them will enter the grounds of the Mosque of Omar (that is built on the site of the Temple, you know), for fear they may chance to tread on the

Holy of Holies. Besides, to go there would remind them of all they have lost."

This refusal on the part of a conquered race to be reminded of their departed glory, and their fear of committing sacrilege by some unconscious step upon hallowed ground, struck me at first as rather poetic; so I looked more respectfully at the mourners.

"So they never go there, you say?"

"Well, never unless they are paid to do some sort of work inside the grounds, such as to repair the walls or part of the mosque. They go there in such cases as that, of course, for they are well paid."

David said this without the least idea of irony, and his statement, as I learned later on, was perfectly correct. When the romance and piety of the ancient Semite run counter to the money-love of the modern Jew, sentiment goes to the wall.

We left the place shortly afterward. As I passed by again on my way to the hotel I saw the line still standing as before; their long dirty coats flapping about their ankles, and the uncut side-locks of hair worn by most of them hanging disheveled and limp.

I recognized several of these disconsolate beings next day in the ghetto, changing money from wire-covered trays filled with coins, or selling merchandise; none looked worse for their melancholy task of the previous afternoon.

On the road home from the Wailing Place, David stopped and pointed to a stone that formed part of an alley wall.

"Do you see that stone with a hollow place something like an open mouth in the middle of it, sir?" he asked.

"Well, a number of fanatics — the people you call 'cranks' — have named it, 'The Stone That Would Have Cried Out.' You remember the verse — 'If these should hold their peace the stones would immediately cry out.' That stone with the mouth, they say, is one of those mentioned in the text."

The foregoing tradition is worthy of having come from the brain of the curio collector who claimed to have found "a piece of marble from the halls where the Bohemian girl dreamt she dwelt."

The new United States Consul to Jerusalem, a young western clergyman, named Wallace, had just arrived from America and was stopping at the Grand. Apart from his being a decidedly good fellow I found him interesting as a contrast to the usual run of American officials abroad; men who, "dressed in a brief authority," try to impress that authority and their own dignity upon all about them.

More by his own nature, I fancy, than from his newness to foreign service, the lately arrived consul had none of these interesting traits.

He and I took a long walk the evening after I reached the city, and as we were both new-comers, we were forced to guess our way. We walked out through the Damascus gate to Calvary, then down through the valley and up the Mount of Olives on the other side. On the mountain-side, not far from the top, we came on one of the divers spots where our Lord is said to have stood when he wept over the city.

There is no proof or probability that this is the true place where Jesus wept; it is not the point from which Jerusalem may first be seen, nor is it on the road from

Bethany. Hence, the tradition is generally accepted, and a marble slab on which we could read in the clear moonlight a Latin inscription to that effect has been let into an adjacent wall.

We climbed to the very summit of the mountain and then looked back at the city. Jerusalem, as it lay under the flood of southern moonlight, seemed to take on a shadow of its old-time beauty. Palm and cypress trees rose darkly here and there; while the high walls and the open space surrounding the great black-domed mosque where once stood the Temple, had perhaps the same look to us as to some moonlight observer thousands of years ago. "The Beautiful Gate of the Temple," facing us, shone brightly as though still covered with gold, and for the time we forgot that it is now nothing but an unshapely mass of yellow stone and plaster.

I have never since seen the Holy City as it appeared that night. The departed glory for the moment returned and rested over all.

Between us and the walls lay a square of ground that, even in the moonlight, was dark and sombre. Thus it may have looked to the Master on the night He prayed there alone, and to the three drowsy peasants, who, unable to watch for one short hour, slept without the garden walls, only awaking in time to fly from the soldiers.

Our eyes, leaving this gloomy enclosure, wandered once more over the gleaming roofs of the city and stopped at the dark, skull-shaped hill that arose on the other side. Garden and hillock stood out like blots on the white, moonlit landscape. Jerusalem has been

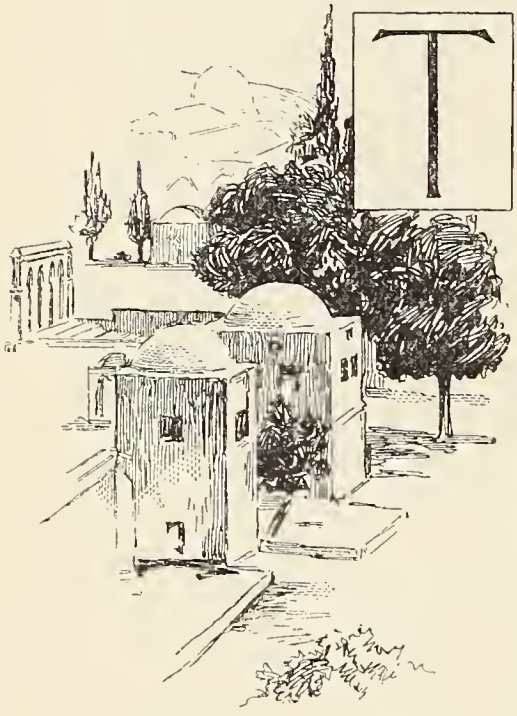
JERUSALEM.

sacked again and again, burned, rebuilt and ruled by men of alien faiths, until nearly every feature of the city is so changed and degraded that only at night is it fair to look upon; but Calvary and Gethsemane have been overlooked by all invaders. Whatever distortions they have met, or will meet, have been and always will be at the hands of Christians.

"Night is the only time to see these things properly," said Mr. Wallace as we started for home. "In the daytime one is confronted with such a maze of facts, traditions, present realities, and lepers, that every sacred association is lost, and we look on it all as on some ordinary scene from history."

CHAPTER XXIV.

MOSQUE OF OMAR — CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE — THE NEW CALVARY — SOLOMON'S QUARRIES.



THE south-east corner of Jerusalem is taken up by the grounds of the Mosque of Omar. Here stood Solomon's Temple, and afterward that of Herod. When Mohammed conquered Syria, the place was changed into a mosque. Permission was given the native Christians to keep for themselves either the Temple site or the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. These Christians, believing the latter place to be the true Calvary, chose it in preference to the far more sacred spot on which stood the Rock of Moriah and the ruins of both the Jewish Temples.

The outer courts of the Temple, the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of Women, are still shown, as is the Judgment Seat — a low dome-covered pavilion open on all sides and supported by pillars — from which Solomon made his famous decision in the case of the two mothers and the child. The inner court, containing the mosque and the Judgment Seat, is entered from a broad flight of steps at whose top stands a tall, carved

pulpit. From this pulpit, Omar, when tired of wholesale butchery, was wont to exhort the faithful.

The mosque itself is a polygonal building with gaudily tiled walls, ornamented pillars, and a huge black dome capped by a gilt crescent. It covers the Rock of Moriah on which Abraham was about to offer up his son when prevented by the LORD. Inside the mosque a cool twilight prevails, through which glisten the metals and bright fixtures on the walls. In the center, surrounded by a railing, lies the great gray rock. Tradition says that when Mohammed went to Heaven, the rock wished to rise with him, but was held back by the hand of the Angel Gabriel. The imprint of a hand in the rock as large as the average man's body, is pointed out as the mark made by the archangel.

Beyond the mosque, in a crypt, are the so-called Stables of Solomon; these were also used by the Crusaders.

A Crusader chapel stands near the pulpit of Omar, and still bears signs of the builder's work. At one end of it is a curiously fashioned pulpit in which, with other designs, a Cross is cleverly inlaid. This cross, except in a certain light, is quite invisible; and has of course never been seen by the present owners of the chapel. If the presence of the holy Symbol should become known, the pulpit would undoubtedly be torn down. Whenever it has been found in places where Moslems wished to worship, it has been destroyed. In the Mosque of St. Sofia at Constantinople the destruction has been carried on to a wholesale extent. But there the fishes — emblems, like the cross, of Christianity — carved on the walls have been permitted to remain, as the

Moslems did not understand their significance. It is odd, however, that in the Chapel of the Mosque of Omar, the central point of Mohammedan worship, this one Cross has been allowed to stand for centuries unseen, but ever present, sole memento of a supplanted religion.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was not far from my hotel. I found the courtyard, opening on the narrow, steep street, filled with beggars, guides, devotees, and peddlers of relics and sacred emblems. The church itself is very old, and from the outside is unsightly. Just within the door a guard of Turkish soldiers is stationed to preserve order. I have heard many unjust criticisms on the so-called tyranny exercised by the ruling nation in making its power felt even in the worshiping-place of another faith. This "tyranny" is most necessary. But for the guard of law and order, many fights would occur in the church. The Greek, Latin, and Protestant Christians are always at swords' points with each other, and more than once before the Holy Sepulchre itself has blood been shed between these rival sects. On religious fête days, Christians of every denomination in Jerusalem rise to a pitch of religious madness, and march, shrieking themselves hoarse, to this church. When members of two different sects chance to meet, while under the influence of this ecstasy, the followers of the true Christ must often be forcibly separated by the Moslem soldiery. Small wonder, then, that our Mohammedan brethren laugh at our religion, calling us "idolaters" and "pagans."

Near the entrance to the church is a slab said to be that on which our Lord's body lay before burial. Hard by is the place where the women stood. Passing on we

ENTRANCE OF THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

enter a great, circular space, the dome of which is upheld by eighteen alabaster pillars. In the center of this, ablaze with lights, stands the little chapel of the Holy Sepulchre. The exterior is disfigured by poor pictures and artificial flowers. Inside are two rooms; one is where the angels stood when Christ arose; the other is the sepulchre itself.

In the wall of the former of the two is a hole in which, on the Greek Easter, holy fire is seen by throngs of believers. It is pitiable that so cheap and old a trick as this appearance of holy fire can still impose on nineteenth century mortals. True, the believers are mainly Russian peasants,—a type probably more bovine and less human than any other in existence—but even with them the deception seems too palpable not to be detected.

The ceremony in which the fire is seen is something like this:—A crowd that would fill double the space is jammed into the rotunda outside the Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre. At the appointed time a torch is passed through the hole from within by a priest who claims that it has just been lighted by fire from Heaven. Priests outside seize the torch, and immediately thousands of painted candles are thrust forward to be lighted in turn from this heaven-lit flambeau. Then as the lights are passed along, the whole mob bursts into ecstatic yells, praising Christ, the Patriarchs, the Sultan, and any one else that comes to mind. Meanwhile, the priests and their guards fight a passage out of the mass; and the holy fire is given to a horseman in waiting at the gate, who gallops with it to Bethlehem, where it is used for lighting candles in the Grotto of the Nativity.

A wonderfully graphic account of the ceremony may be found in Dean Stanley's book, *Sinai and Palestine.*

The Sepulchre Room of the chapel is entered through an opening so low as to force the incomer to stoop almost on his hands and knees. The room is lined with shining marble; forty-three colored lights from gold and silver lamps illumine it. The Tomb is at one side of the room, the top serving as an altar. Near it is a small column, said by many "believers" to be the center of the world. This idea arises from Ezekiel's text: "This is Jerusalem. I have set it in the midst of nations and countries that are round about her."

Custom demands that, in leaving the room, visitors walk out backward as from the presence of royalty, keeping their faces to the Tomb.

The seat from which the Empress Helena saw the three crosses unearthed, Helena's chapel, the three chapels said to be built on the site of Calvary, the cleft in the rock supposed to go down to the middle of the earth rent at the time of the Crucifixion, and many other highly interesting places, are shown in the vicinity of the Holy Sepulchre. The scene of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, the grave of Adam, the tombs of Joseph and Nicodemus, as well as that of Godfrey de Bouillon, — are also grouped under this one roof, with a beautiful economy of space that does infinite credit to the founders of the gigantic hoax known as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. From an æsthetic standpoint the place is a success. The gems and precious metals, the alabaster columns, the myriad colored lights in jeweled lamps, the tall marble candlesticks, and the magnificent size of the building, — all go to form a beauti-

ful and impressive spectacle. Looked at from a religious point of view and with the idea that God is to be worshiped in spirit only, the church leaves much to be desired. Christians who go there — poor people, many of them, who have never before seen or heard of such richness — are often so carried away by the sight, and by the numerous legends of the place, that they reach the pitch of religious frenzy to which I have alluded, and well deserve the contempt poured on them by the more rational Mohammedans.

"Is there any reason to believe that this was the scene of the Crucifixion?" I asked David as we went out; "I mean beyond the fact of Helena's dream?"

"None, sir. It is all based on the dream of one woman, and the finding of three crosses underground here. Thousands of people were crucified at Jerusalem by Titus, so it isn't strange that three, or even a dozen, crosses should have been dug up. We know, too, that Christ suffered without the gates; whereas this place is well within the walls, and always was. Shall we go and have another look at the real Golgotha?"

I glanced back at the polished columns and the blaze of lights, and went on with him.

"It will be a change at least, sir, from all that lot of candles and graves of Patriarchs," remarked the dragoman, as we picked our way through the crowd in the courtyard.

Passing through a long street lined with booths and bazars, we came to the Damascus Gate, at the northern end of the city. A furlong farther on was the low, round-backed hill we had seen from Scopus.

The hill is now a Moslem burying-ground, but was

used in olden times as a place of execution. Near by is a Dominican convent that marks the site of Stephen's stoning. After it was proved that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was not the true site of Calvary, and when the ancient boundaries of Jerusalem were ascertained, effort was made to fix on some hill without the gates where the Crucifixion could have taken place. To the south and east there is almost a sheer drop from the city into the valley below; so, at last, by a long and clear chain of argument that has before now become familiar to all students of archæology, this hill to the north of Jerusalem, and a tomb in its side, have been identified as the place of execution and the sepulchre of Our Lord. This untempled hill with its gray riven rocks and uncared-for grass, and the plain hillside tomb in whose now empty central space lay the body of the man Jesus, before the GOD arose — form striking contrasts to the gorgeous sepulchres and shrines that adorn the church within the walls.

The Catholics, Latin and Greek, frown alike on this new Calvary; for, should it once be accepted by the world as the true Golgotha, what would become of their Church of the Holy Sepulchre? and who would pay for new candles and gemmed lamps?

Near the Damascus Gate is the entrance to the old quarries, whence came the stone for the Temple and the walls. The quarries, unused nowadays, reach far under the city, sloping downward, like the passage to the Styx in Italy. Many twists and by-paths render them dangerous to explore without the help of trained guides.

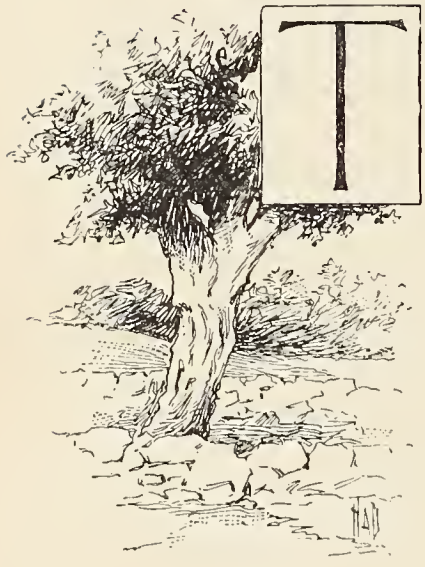
An arched roof, grimed with the smoke of centuries, overhangs these quarries, and on the dripping walls

pick-marks may be seen. All about the ground blocks of stone, still bearing scratches of the lever, lie where Jewish and Roman workmen left them; while scattered at intervals are lumps of stone, soft as chalk and white and sparkling like snow.

A European came down here to explore, some years ago, at a time when foreigners were few and often ill-treated. He entered the quarry-mouth alone, and was never seen again. Whether he wandered too far to find his way back and starved to death, or whether some band of robbers living underground made away with him, no one knows. His body was never found.

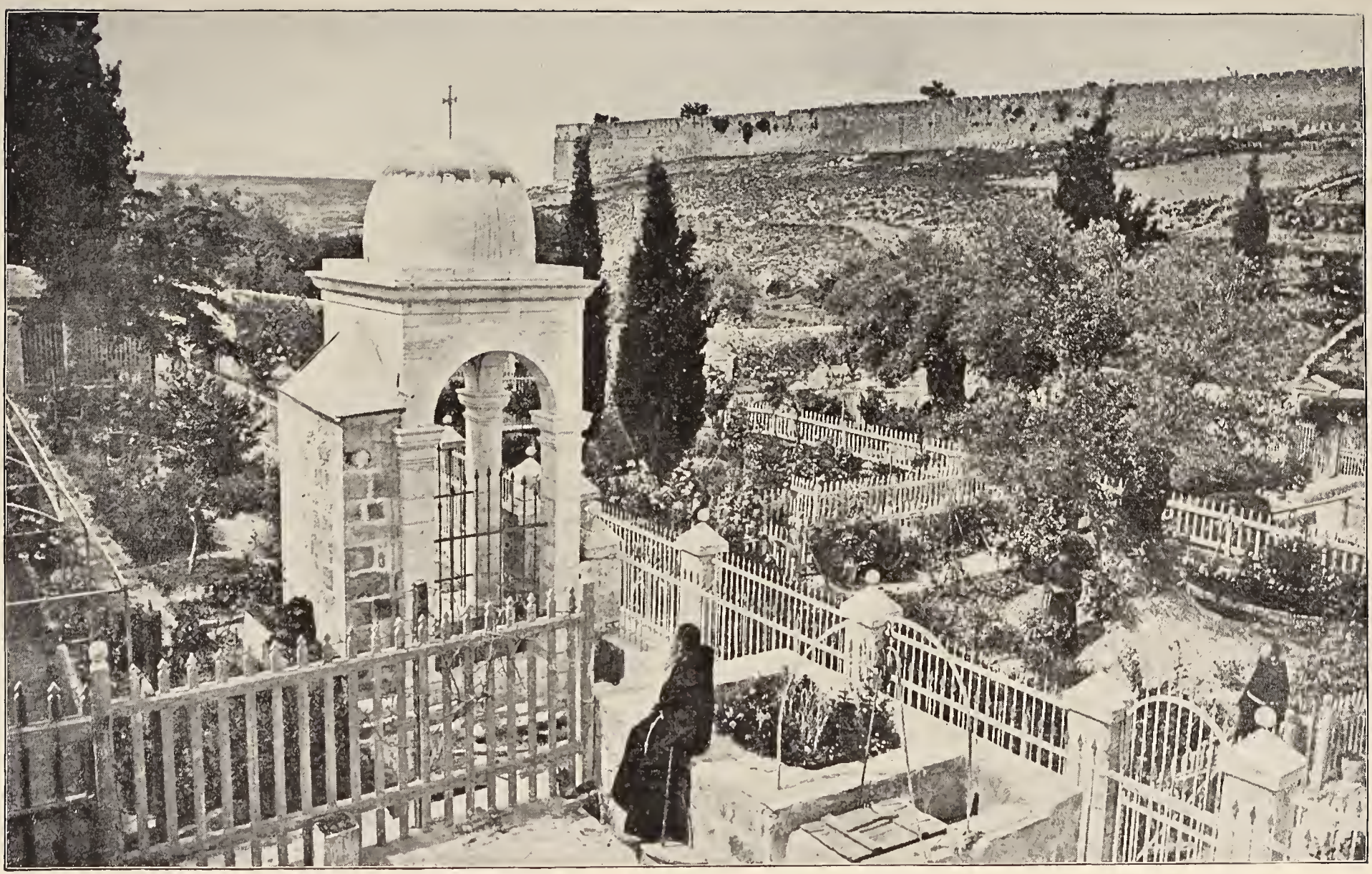
CHAPTER XXV.

MOUNT OF OLIVES — GETHSEMANE — BETHANY — AT SUNSET.



TO reach the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane from Jerusalem one must go down the steep road to the right of the Damascus Gate into the valley and across the dried Brook Kedron. The bit of road crossing the narrow valley is, during business (*i.e.* tourist) hours alive with beggars of all sorts. Cripples, blind men, and lepers predominate. It is almost impossible to pass here by day without being surrounded by a filthy and imploring throng of mendicants, who mingle a few unmeaning English words they have picked up with their professional cant. So great a nuisance and at such a place should surely be abated by law, for not only are all sacred thoughts that would be otherwise inspired by the scene of the Master's last night on earth dispelled, but, from a more practical view, traffic is seriously checked.

The location of Gethsemane is a mooted point. The Latins have enclosed one place, near the foot of Olivet; immediately across the road the Greeks have



GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

enclosed another; while divers cranks have fixed on still different spots.

The Latin Gethsemane is, however, accepted by most people. A low house stands near the gate and in the garden's center is a great, gnarled olive-tree, the largest I ever saw. The tree is very old, and is curiously twisted and deformed. It forms the converging point of the several paths of the enclosure. The rest of the garden is commonplace and well-kept, with regularly laid-out beds of marigolds, lavender, and princess-feather, and has a prim, modern look that is but half modified by the old tree in the center. Its only interest to-day arises from the fact, or rather the probability, that it was the scene of Christ's Agony. Down the hill from the city and across the brook — then living water — the Master must have passed with the three disciples on the night He was betrayed; and over the same road the priest's servants followed, led by the twelfth disciple: the disciple who, says an English writer, but for his love of money, might have figured to this day as Saint Judas.

Somewhere near the gate slept the three disciples while their Lord went within to pray.

Of the four Evangelists who describe the night at Gethsemane, John alone was present there, and he alone of the four neglects — possibly through inadvertence — to mention that he and his two colleagues slept when Christ had thrice asked them to watch. John also frequently speaks of himself as the disciple Christ especially loved; yet it was Peter, not he, who struck the only blow in His defense.

On certain fête days of the Catholic Church the gar-

den is made a rallying-point for believers, and a species of sacred picnic with music and refreshments and a great deal of noise is held within its walls.

The road near the garden chanced to be empty when we entered, but before we came out I heard a murmur and the patter of many feet on the other side of the wall. When we opened the gate, we found before us a mob of lepers, who had no doubt been told by a scout that a howaji was visiting the garden. As we stepped out they rushed at us hungrily, thrusting forward their sore, disfigured faces and raising in their rough, weak voices the well-known plea of "*Abras! Abras! Backsheesh, howaji! backsheesh!*" (Lepers! We are lepers! Give us money, howaji, give us money!)

David threw a few coppers at them and ordered them off, but the sight had already driven all the sacred associations of the place from my mind.

We went on, over the side of the Mount of Olives to Bethany, which is a Sabbath-day's journey (fifteen furlongs) from Jerusalem.

Bethany is now a town little better, and no cleaner than the hill-villages I had passed through in Northern Palestine. It is built on the hillside, starting at the main road and running back toward the top of Olivet. Near the end of the village stands a ruined column of brownish-red stone, bent and broken, which is too remarkable an object to have escaped the vigilant eye of the tradition-hunter. It is accordingly pointed out as a remnant of the house of Simon the Leper, where Christ's feet were bathed by the Magdalene. Sane people, however, believe it to be the remains of a defense tower belonging to the cloister built by Queen Millicent of Jerusalem.

BETHANY.

I was shown the tomb of Lazarus, a small subterranean room at the bottom of a flight of steps, much less likely to be the genuine burial-place of Lazarus than are any of the Jewish tombs built in the neighboring rocks. All Jewish tombs were protected by a flat stone, not unlike a thin millstone in shape, which was placed before the opening. This stone was set in a groove and balanced in such a way that the lightest push sent it rolling to one side. Hence the "rolling away the stone" was no difficult feat.

Had I still cherished illusions, the visit to Bethany must certainly have cured me. It seemed impossible that this village with the twoscore flat-roofed mud huts swarming with vermin, the squalor and filth, the utter lack of all natural or architectural beauty and the horde of ragged, ophthalmic natives and half-clad children, should once have been the sequestered spot where Our Lord, wearied by His earthly labors, came for rest.

"Do you suppose it was anything like this in Christ's time?" I asked David.

"Well, sir," he replied doubtfully, "some of those ladies you spoke of as 'saint-chasers' say it was beautiful in those days, and had wide streets with shade-trees on each side and pretty cottages; but as I take it, country villages in Palestine are very much the same now as they were in Christ's day, and we have no real reason to think this town was at all different."

I had often heard descriptions — generally by people who had never visited the East (such people are usually strong on Oriental description, I find) — of the peaceful village with its picturesque peasants, to which the world-wearied Christ turned aside for His rare intervals

of rest. Reality had sadly changed the surroundings of the picture; but after all, the central Figure remained the same, — a Figure that could disregard surroundings.

We returned to the city through the Valley of Jehoshaphat, stopping on the way to look at the Virgin's Fountain, which is Jerusalem's strongest water supply.

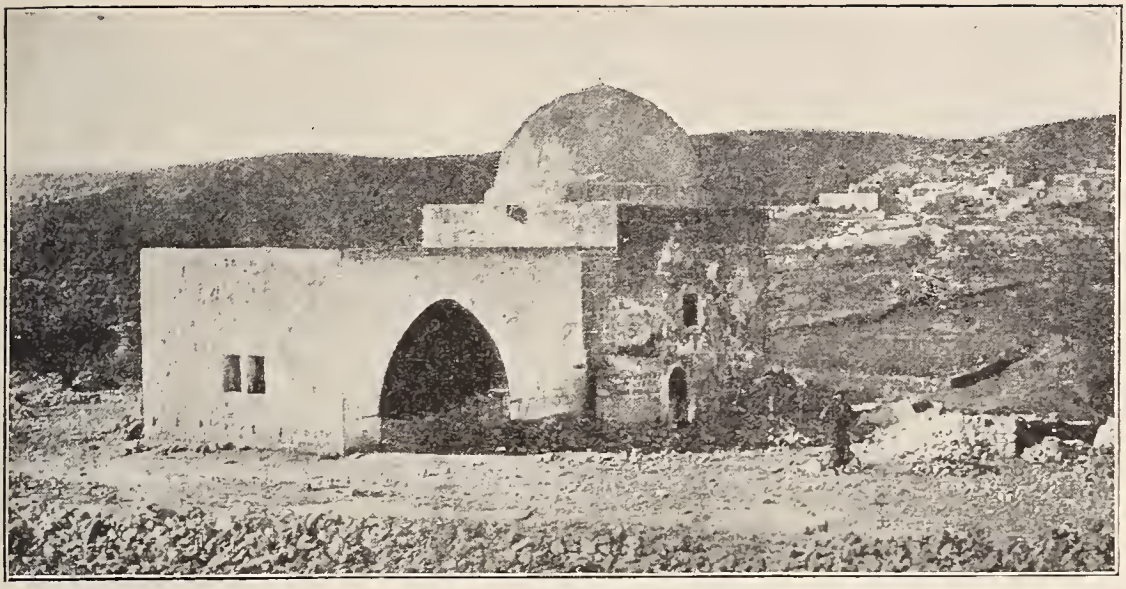
We also passed the potter's field, bought with the thirty pieces; near it we saw a fig-tree that may have been fifty years old. David called my attention to it, and said tradition named it as the tree whereon Judas hanged himself.

I made Jerusalem my headquarters for weeks, coming back to it after all my short trips into the surrounding country. I visited a number of places, the description of which would fill several unnecessary chapters, and upon which, had not others written before me, I might be tempted to dwell. But the Tombs of the Kings, the Churches of the Evangelists, the Ancient Wells of the city, the Arch of Robinson, the Excavations, the Synagogues, and a hundred other points of interest, are they not written in the Chronicles of the many wise men who have already published instructive and, as a rule, very heavy, books on Palestine?

I generally spent the hour of sunset on the roof of the Grand Hotel. The hotel was on Mount Zion, and commanded a view of the whole city. The air grew cooler as the sun sank, and the Mount of Olives was bathed in yellow light. At all points of the city I could see white-draped natives sitting on their roofs; and I could look down on the soldiers quartered at David's Tower, across the street, as they lay smoking or talked in groups. As the sun dropped behind the hill

above the city where an old-fashioned windmill stood out black against the red sky, muezzins from many minarets summoned the faithful to prayer, — a summons which, I grieve to say, was little more heeded by the faithful at Jerusalem than by their Damascene co-religionists. While the shrill call rose and fell on the still air, the white-robed loafers gossiped as before, and the soldiers, lighting fresh cigarettes, went on with their conversation. On a few roofs, pious Mohammedans spread out rugs, and kneeling on them went through some athletic praying.

A line of pilgrims sometimes came up the street singing Latin chants — it was near Christmas-time, and pilgrims were flocking from all sides to the Holy City — as they dragged their tired bodies toward one of the Catholic hospices. The roof-top view at sunset was thoroughly Oriental; and I felt the strong incongruity on leaving it and going downstairs to a European dinner among people of my own land and language.



Rachel's Tomb.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT AT BETHLEHEM — CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY.

I HAVE spoken of the processions of pilgrims that every day entered Jerusalem. As the Latin Christmas (December 25th) drew near, the throngs of devotees, cranks, and sight-seers poured in from all parts of the world to celebrate the great anniversary.

Christmas fell on Monday, and high mass was to be held Sunday evening in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem. David ordered rooms at the Hotel de Bethlëem for the occasion, and on Sunday morning we left Jerusalem, starting before luncheon that we might witness the Patriarch's entrance to Bethlehem at noon. The day was fine, and as the distance was only five miles, we

went in a carriage. *En route*, we passed the birthplace of Benjamin, where a convent has been built at the end of an avenue of olive-trees; and, farther on, the tomb of Rachel. This latter is like most saints' tombs, a small, white-domed building, and is in the midst of a Bedouin burying-ground. The Bedouin graves are scattered irregularly about the field, each one marked with an egg-shaped pile of loose stones placed above the dead, rather as a protection from wild beasts than

ELIJAH'S ROCK.

to show the spot of burial. Nearly all graves in the East are built for protection either against beasts or the elements. In Port Saïd, Egypt, the burying-ground is necessarily laid out in a sand-barren, and lest the sand should be blown away by sea-gales and thus leave the bodies exposed, wooden boxes — usually painted with some gaudy combination of colors — are set over the graves.

Leaving Rachel's tomb we rode on and came to a stone-girt well. This is called the Well of the Three Kings, and is supposed to be the spot where the three

wise men of the East stopped to drink on their way to Bethlehem.

Some distance beyond this, at a turn in the road, is a long rock, under a tree. An imprint as of a man's body dents the rock, and at the head a cross is carved. Here, say true believers (*i.e.* traditionists), Elijah slept when, pausing in his flight from Ahab, he received the vision bidding him turn back.

The steeples and minarets of Bethlehem rose before us soon after we left Elijah's Rock, and a few minutes later we drove down a narrow street just wide enough for one carriage to pass, and entered the public square of the town, where a large crowd was already gathered.

The roof of our hotel was, like those of other Eastern caravanserais, flat and tiled, with a low wall running about it. Thither we went soon after our arrival, and, taking seats at a corner that commanded the whole square, looked down upon the scene beneath.

The crowd had by this time become so dense that a file of soldiers was sent out from the barracks across the way to clear a path along the road to the church. The Syrian police might almost have given lessons to their New York compeers, for they lashed about with a will, striking men, women, and children alike with their long cowhide whips. I noticed one improvement especially over American methods: such people as chanced to be struck, instead of swearing that they would complain to the Police Commissioners, or that they would vote against the present city government next election, submitted meekly and moved back into the crowd.

A public square packed with men, all in holiday

attire is, even in western countries, an interesting sight. Far more so here where holiday costumes are of the most vivid hues. A thousand different tints were shown, and the whole square was a tossing, ever-changing kaleidoscope, a very carnival of color.

Shepherds had come in from the surrounding mountains, many still holding staves or rustic flutes, and one or two with lambs or kids in their arms. Peasants, farmers, Bedouins, merchants, Nubians, Bethlehemites, citizens, rich and poor, from every town in Palestine, soldiers, gold-laced cavasses, Turkish nobles, and, in short, all sorts and conditions of men were assembled; from the Pasha who, surrounded by his richly uniformed suite and wearing an English covert-coat and patent leather boots, sat under a large umbrella on the barracks terrace, down to Jaffa boatmen with red caps and yellow sashes.

The roofs and casements for blocks around were thronged with white-veiled Bethlehem women. The long white veils are peculiar to Bethlehem, and the bevies of women who wore them looked, as they crowded housetop and terrace, like flocks of white doves in the dove-cots.

After ten minutes' hard work on the part of the soldier-police, a way was cleared; and down the street clattered an irregular troop of horse. Bedouins, soldiers, and such citizens as owned fast horses had offered their services to act as the Patriarch's guard, and had been accepted at a mejidie each. They headed the procession, racing over the slippery stones and making their horses curvet and wheel about on their haunches, to the admiration and imminent danger of the crowd.

As the horsemen passed by, a blare of trumpets sounded and then ceased as a deep-toned Latin chant arose, swelled from all sides by a thousand voices.

"They crowded Housetop and Terrace."

A band of surpliced choir-boys came down the street waving censers and singing. Behind them marched in two lines, one on either side of the road, fifty Latin

monks, tonsured, and wearing albs over their brown robes. Some of these monks were Europeans, and had pale ascetic faces, clean-shaven as a rule. The brothers from Syrian monasteries were, however, for the most part tall and broad-shouldered, with bronzed faces and heavy beards. The typical Syrian monk's appearance always fulfills my idea of John the Baptist.

Walking in the midst of this escort and followed by several hundred Franciscans, came the Patriarch, his long skirts held up by two little choir-boys. His dress contained nearly all the colors and transition hues of the spectrum, lavender and silver predominating.

The chant grew less as it passed on, and the foremost of the procession met a company of monks who issued from the church.

David looked over the low wall of the roof after the receding pageant and said reflectively, —

"Our Lord Jesus Christ was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He was also a carpenter's son and He was laid in a manger. Does all this noise and parade seem just in keeping with His life?"

The same thought had filled my own mind for the past half-hour; but I was prevented from replying, for just then an ecstatic saint-chaser — whom, by the way, I had never seen before — turned to me with a volley of adjectives in praise of the wonderful sight, and in self-gratulation that she had been deemed worthy to look on such things with mortal eyes.

As the last solemn note of the chant ceased at the threshold of the church, the crowd began to melt away; and when I looked down again the square was half-

empty. We left the roof and crossed over toward the Church of the Nativity.

Bethlehem, like Nazareth, is built into a concave hill-side surrounded by fields and olive orchards; the houses are very old, most of them being of gray stone and cement, two or more stories high, with arched windows and balconies. The loose and grass-grown stones on many of the flat roofs give the town a half-ruined look that is contradicted by the thriving condition of the inhabitants. Bethlehem women are noted for their beauty. I saw there many girls whose faces might well have served as models for the Madonna; they were dressed with a picturesqueness far different from the ordinary hideous costumes of Syrian women.

Bethlehem Bride.

Tradition says that since the time when Herod slaughtered all the male children of Bethlehem, God has recompensed the town by giving the women more and fairer sons than those of any other place of its size in the East.

The present population of Bethlehem is about four

thousand. The town's principal industry is mother-of-pearl working. Nearly all the mother-of-pearl ornaments, carved shells, crucifixes, etc., brought from the East are made by Bethlehemite workmen.

We made our way with some difficulty into the Church of the Nativity. This is perhaps the oldest in the world; it is certainly the oldest in Palestine, having been built by Constantine early in the fourth century. The interior is rigidly plain, except for the altar and its surroundings. High limestone pillars, each a monolith and crowned by Corinthian capitals, separate the two side aisles from the central space; and on the walls are faint traces of mottoes and paintings left by Crusaders, with here and there an almost effaced fragment of mosaic. The distance from the main entrance to the high altar is nearly two hundred feet.

We made a descent of thirteen steps into the crypt, where the Chapel of the Nativity is situated. This place was once, like many Palestine stables, a natural cave. Instead of leaving the stable in pristine roughness, — a state that would have appealed to pilgrims, and brought more clearly before them the picture of Christ's birth, — every sort of decoration has been used to hide the walls and to change the whole aspect of the place.

The Chapel is always lighted. Against the wall at one side, stand two marble pillars crowned by a shelf that serves as an altar, and that incidentally bears a ridiculous resemblance to a mantelpiece. The shelf, or altar, holds several pictures of the Nativity; under it is an arched shrine lined with painted marble. This is shaped like an open fireplace and is eminently in

keeping with the mantel-like arrangement above it. In the shrine burn fifteen silver lamps, and on the floor beneath is a star, — also of silver, — bearing the inscription: "*Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est.*" The star marks the probable spot of Christ's birth.

A well-known writer on Palestine says that on his visit to the Chapel he knelt, like all other pilgrims, and kissed the star, "weeping like a child" at sight of the inscription. The average man will be more tempted to weep with disgust when, after picturing the holy quiet and simplicity that should surround the birthplace of Our Lord, he finds himself in this room of glaring hangings and tawdry ornaments, among a crowd of whispering, shuffling devotees; still more will he be sickened when he looks on the one rational being in the whole place — the very necessary Turkish soldier who stands guard in the background to prevent worshipers of the Prince of Peace from murdering each other on the spot where their Master was born.

Near the Grotto of the Nativity is the cave in which St. Jerome lived in the fourth century, close to the place of Christ's birth. In this cave he wrote his great translation of the Vulgate. In the church above the Grotto, bargaining and gossiping go on freely at all times, and travelers are constantly beset by guides, paupers, and curio-sellers.

It is an apt fulfillment of Christ's reproach on man's treatment of His Father's house: "Ye have made it a den of thieves."

CHAPTER XXVII.

MIDNIGHT MASS IN THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY — CHANT OF THE PILGRIMS — A CHRISTMAS DINNER.

DAVID sent a servant early in the evening to hold seats for us for the midnight mass in the Church of the Nativity. At ten o'clock we left our hotel for the church. Mass had already begun when we arrived, and the building was full. Chairs had been set wherever room could be found; every aisle was blocked, and a number of men stood or knelt between the rows of seats. The heat, of course, was intense.

In one part of the church knelt several hundred Bethlehem women, their long veils blending under the dim tapers into a swaying mass of white. In front of them, near the altar, were a number of young girls lately confirmed, who, dressed all in white, had come to take their first communion. The rest of the church was filled with men, — Syrians, pilgrims, and sightseers.

The High Altar was ablaze and the lights shone mistily through clouds of incense. Priests moved to and fro behind the rail, officiating in the service. The gray-

bearded Patriarch, bedecked into a life-like imitation of Solomon in all his glory, sat in a throne-chair to the left of the altar, and every few minutes put on some newer and more gorgeous robe, each portion of which had a special religious significance.

Behind the altar-screen sang an invisible choir of men and boys, and somewhere else an unseen organ played.

The mass went on until a few minutes before twelve. Then the chanting ceased and a great silence fell over the crowd of worshipers. Even the priests knelt as if carved in stone. Through the midnight stillness came, as from afar off, a faint strain of music, and a low, sweet lullaby — the sweetest I ever heard — was played. The Latins call it "The Lullaby of the Angels." It seemed to have no beginning or end. We simply became conscious of it without knowing when it had begun. Even the native peasants, whose sole idea of music is gathered from their own tuneless songs, awoke and listened in wonder. Somehow the stiff, gold-embroidered figure of the Patriarch himself looked insignificant as the notes of the lullaby stole through the great building. I know nothing of music; I cannot even say whether or not the playing was technically good. I only know that the audience was silent, and that every man listened with a new-found attention; for myself the story and associations of the place came to me as they had not done during all the elaborate mass.

But the sacred interval in the flashy programme was destined to be short. Suddenly a little curtain above the altar was swept aside by an unseen hand, disclosing the Cradle and Child. Priests, Patriarch, and

devotees prostrated themselves before it, and the full choir broke into the *Gloria in Excelsis.*

I have heard this Disclosure of the Cradle spoken of as a cheap stage-trick, and, looked at from a common-sense point of view, it amounts to little more. The music, the incense, and the occasion, however, made the trick seem less stagey and meretricious at the moment, than are the other "shows" of the church.

At two o'clock the Cradle was carried in procession through the nave, with a ceremony similar to the Elevation of the Host, and was then taken down into the Grotto.

Jamal, knowing that I would be hungry after so long a service, had with his ordinary thoughtfulness, ordered a light supper to be prepared in the refectory of the monastery close by. Here I was joined by a Bey — he was also the oldest of forty brothers — whom I had met in Damascus, the Commandant of the Jerusalem garrison, and several younger officers, who took supper with me. These officers had all been sent with their commands to Bethlehem to see that Christmas passed off quietly and in order.

A month or so before, the cavasse of the Russian Consul had shot and killed a Latin (Roman Catholic) monk in the Grotto of the Nativity, during a scuffle for precedence at the altar. An odd complication arose from this shooting. The Russian government, as upholders of the Greek Church in Palestine; the French government, protectors of the Latin Church; the Turkish government, rulers of the land in which the crime was committed, and the Austrian government (the cavasse was a Hungarian), all were concerned. The

matter was of interest and bade fair to cause an international quarrel. Trouble was, however, averted by an act which, whether intentional or not, showed rare diplomacy. The guards who were conducting the cavasse home to prison were forced to stop overnight at Port Saïd (of itself punishment enough for any ordinary crime), where the whole party proceeded to get gloriously drunk. The cavasse, taking advantage of their condition, settled the international difficulty by escaping. It was the shortest and easiest mode of ending the case, and there is little chance of his recapture.

I heard the above anecdote for the first time from my fellow diners, that night at Bethlehem; I have since seen it in European papers.

We reached the hotel about three o'clock Christmas morning, and as I had no wish to sleep I went up to the roof for a quiet smoke before turning in.

My eyes were still dazzled by the lights and my senses surfeited by the music and color of the five-hour service I had so lately quitted. I found the dim quiet of the winter night refreshing.

All nature was asleep. The square beneath was desolate and the hillside houses dark. The night was clear and cold, distant trees, rocks, and walls showing plainly under the strong light of the southern stars.

Beyond stretched hills, valleys, and olive orchards, unchanged no doubt since the night when "shepherds abiding in the field keeping watch over their flocks," heard the angels' *Gloria.*

The rich fields about the city, now checkered with olive-shade, the silent hills that had stood guard over the hallowed place for so many ages, and over all the

brilliant star I had so often seen, which to-night shone brighter than ever as it hung above Bethlehem, — all these were far more impressive than the church scene I had just left.

For some time nothing broke the stillness of the night. At last, from far away, came the sound of a Latin chant, rising strong and solemn on the hushed air, re-echoing from the hills and ever drawing nearer.

I fancied, for a moment, that I was dreaming, for the surroundings and the silence had so utterly carried me from to-day back into the great Past, that the singing, weird and unnatural as it sounded, coming from the sleeping valley beyond the town, seemed part of the scene I was trying to revive. But I remembered almost immediately having heard that a band of pilgrims go to the village of the Good Shepherds in the plain below, each Christmas morning after the midnight mass, and return singing to Bethlehem.

The chant drew near, and as the pilgrims reached the outskirts of Bethlehem all the chimes in the Church of the Nativity rang out. The town, so still ten minutes before, now re-echoed with the sweet clangor of bells and with a hundred singing voices. High in their open belfry I could see the black bells tossing wildly to and fro against the paler sky; and through the square came the pilgrims, their chant rising louder and more solemnly as they passed between the double line of tall buildings.

Then, when the long dark line had wound down the street, the chant died slowly away and the bells stood still, leaving the night as lonely and silent as before.

BETHLEHEM.

Next morning we revisited the church, and then went on to the village of the Good Shepherds. From the high ground behind the city a little patch of blue water between two hills was visible to eastward — a corner of the Dead Sea; and beyond it a level line of brown hills — the Mountains of Moab — stood flushed by the early sunlight.

Before leaving the town we visited David's Well, — "the well of Bethlehem which is at the gate." From this spring the three strong men, having broken through the lines of the Philistine army, "drew water — and took it and brought it to David: but David would not drink of it but poured it out to the Lord."

The several mouths of the well are kept sealed nowadays and the space around them is walled in.

I was anxious to reach Jerusalem in time for Christmas dinner at the New Grand Hotel, so we left Bethlehem early in the afternoon.

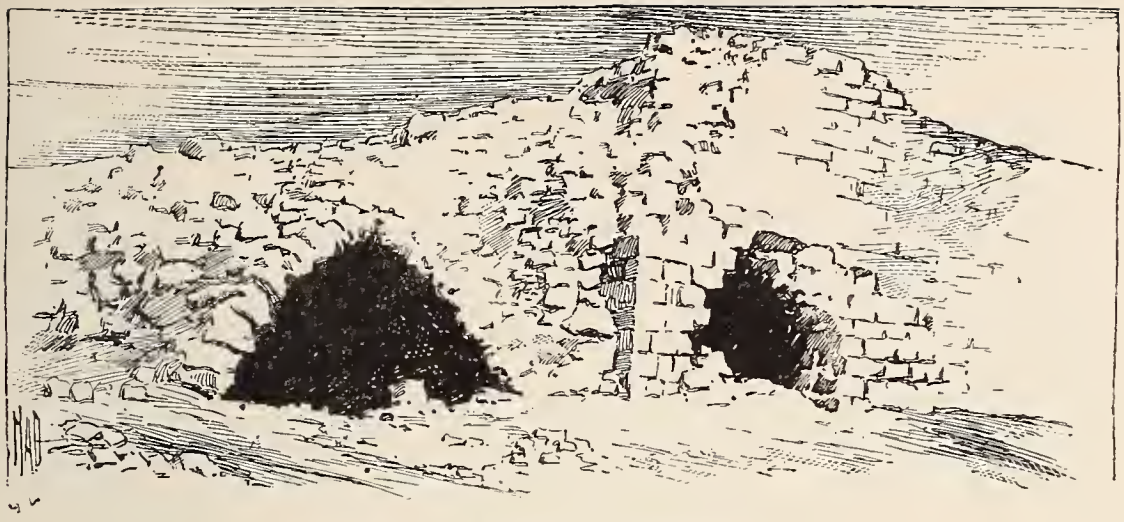
M. Gelat had been waited on by a delegation of guests, who had threatened that unless such a Christmas dinner were forthcoming as should eclipse any culinary event in the annals of Jerusalem, we, the guests, would desert in a body, and proceed, pilgrim-like, singing through the streets, to Howard's Hotel, the rival hostelry, where we would take up our future quarters.

Whether through fear lest we might carry out our threat, or through pride in showing off the ability of his cook, mine host promised to do his best; and he did it.

When we entered the dining-room that evening we found it draped with American, English, Austrian, German, French, Italian, and Turkish flags. Representatives of each of these nations were present, and the room was

packed. The dinner reflected glory on the name of Gelat; an after-dinner speech of welcome added to his fame.

The retiring United States Consul, Dr. Merrill, was toastmaster; and several regulation speeches, all more or less notable for bad delivery and good patriotism, were made. So the day closed pleasantly, if in a somewhat incongruous style.



Ruins of a Roman Watch-tower.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

VALLEY OF THE KEDRON — EN ROUTE FOR JERICHO — RAVENS OR ARABS.

I WAS rain-held in Jerusalem for the next week. The Syrian rains, after a momentary pause, had recommenced, bearing with them a chill and dampness that found its way through the thickest clothes.

David and I wandered about in the daytime seeing churches, excavations, antiquities, etc.; in the evenings I played billiards with the Consul in the hotel billiard-room. It was not an unpleasant week for me, but, in the midst of a country I was anxious to see, I grew tired of life in the city and longed for the saddle, the camp, and Massoud. I called on the little horse once or twice in his stable, and, though he always received me gladly, there was a gentle meekness in his manner that foretold a lively time when he should be once more on the road.

One night the skies cleared, and a northwest wind sprang up. The next morning was fine and we started, bag and baggage, for Jericho. We left Jerusalem by the Jaffa gate and rode through the Valley of Jehoshaphat; stopping on our way to inspect the Pool of Siloam. When David had told me we should pass the Pool that morning I recalled the lines of the old hymn: —

"By cool Siloam's shady rill
How fair the lily grows.
How sweet the breath beneath the hill
Of Sharon's dewy rose."

I had already seen the Rose of Sharon — a weed whose blossom is not unlike that of a dried wild carrot. Still, I thought, Siloam might be more like the hymnologist's idea. Perhaps it may have been more so in the time of Christ; but not now.

A rocky, barren valley, with a leper settlement on the hillside above it, forms the Siloam of to-day. The Pool is about fifty by twenty feet in area, and is quite shallow. The water is sluggish and dirty, black slime covering the bottom and sides. A broken column (the remnant of a church) rises from it, and loose, mud-coated stones lie about the edge. This constitutes the modern edition of "cool Siloam's shady rill." *Hic jacet* another popular illusion!

From the spring to the Pool is so slight an incline that the connecting stream flows very slowly — in fact, without visible motion. Hence, probably, Isaiah's likening Israel to "the waters of Shiloah that go softly."

Higher up in the valley, between Jerusalem and Olivet, stands the so-called Tomb of Absalom. Absa-

Tomb of Absalom: "A Pillar which is in the King's Dale."

lom's body really lies in the wood of Ephraim, some distance north of Jerusalem. He was not buried in his "Tomb," for we read that David's followers "cast him into a great pit in the wood and laid a very great heap of stones upon him."

The monument in the valley between the city and the Mount of Olives is that mentioned in Second Samuel: "Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and reared up for himself a pillar which is in the king's dale, for he said, 'I have no son to keep my name in remembrance;' and he called the pillar after his own name, and it is called unto this day Absalom's place."

The "pillar" is perhaps fifty feet high, and twenty feet square; the lower half is hewn from the solid rock, while the upper is built of large stones, rising to a peak shaped like the top of a corked bottle. Ionic pillars support the sides and a Doric frieze runs about it. The only entrance is through an opening in the side some distance above the ground. The interior consists of a room about eight feet square, which is lined on two sides with empty graves cut in the rock. The floor of the tomb-room, as well as the outer base of the monument, is littered with stones and other rubbish; for it has always been the custom for passers-by to throw missiles at it, and at the same time to utter a curse against Absalom.

Instances of this custom of throwing stones and curses at the tombs of ill-doers may be seen throughout the East. The traditional tomb of Cain has been quite covered by pious stone-throwers. The "pillar which is in the king's dale" cannot have been completed in

Absalom's day, as the Greek decorations must necessarily have been added at a later period.

As we neared Siloam we saw a dozen lepers sunning themselves outside the long, low hovels that serve them as shelter. We were in the valley and they high on the hill, but they saw us, and, rising, ran down the hill on the other side, leaping and hopping grotesquely over the stones of the slope in an effort to put speed into their stiffened, distorted bodies. They soon disappeared over a ridge; but five minutes later, as we rounded the foot of the hill on our southward journey, we came upon them crouched in a line at the roadside, unclean rags huddled closely about them to keep out the biting morning air.

As we came nearer they looked up as if surprised to see us, then, staggering weakly to their feet, they went through the regular performance of screaming for backsheesh. When I remembered the quickness they had shown in hobbling down the hill, this assumed feebleness added to the revulsion I had always felt at the sight of them.

Almost all the road from Jerusalem to Jericho lies nearly thirteen hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean.

Bedouins are still strong about the Jordan, and travelers are obliged to engage a Sheik or elder from one of the tribes to act in the double capacity of guide and guard from Jerusalem. As the road is perfectly plain and as there is no danger from wild beasts, such an escort is absolutely unnecessary. It is merely a form of tribute expected by the Bedouins for permission to travel through their country. Government,

dragomans, and tourists alike realize this, and no steps are taken to prevent the practice. As it is humiliating to confess that you pay tribute to a savage tribe for the privilege of passing through a settled land, tourists pretend that the Sheiks who accompany them do so merely in the capacity of escort.

Our "escort," then, was a taciturn Bedouin from one of the southern tribes. He was well mounted and armed, — the typical tent-dweller in looks, dress, and manner, — and had a bad habit of stopping to say his prayers — a long and complicated operation — whenever we were most in a hurry.

An hour after we had left Jerusalem we came to the Apostle's Fountain, where Christ is said to have drunk on his way to Jerusalem. This, tradition tells us, was also the spot where He "took the twelve disciples apart in the way and said unto them: 'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed.'"

A ruined, one-roomed khan of reddish stone, roofed over with some sort of thatch, stands opposite this fountain on the other side of the road, and is still used as a shelter and resting-place for travelers.

The air grew warmer as we rode down toward the valley of the Jordan, and the landscape had a brighter look. It was pleasant to be once more in the saddle, riding through open country. We lunched at a khan midway between Jerusalem and Jericho. This khan is a large walled enclosure roofed over at one end. The roofed portion is open at two sides and faces on the large courtyard. Tables are set here and there, and on the walls rude inscriptions, most of them in French or Arabic, have been scratched.

The entrance is a gateway with two heavy doors, and to the left of this is a small guard-room where two Turkish soldiers — caretakers and guards of the place — sleep. The building is only five or six years old, and is built on the site of a Roman hostelry, known as the Khan of the Good Samaritan. Here the Samaritan is said to have brought the wounded man who had been journeying from Jerusalem to Jericho. A quarter-mile farther on, the road winds through a mass of rocks, and a turn in the highway here is pointed out as the identical spot where the unfortunate recipient of the Samaritan's mercy fell among thieves.

On a hill overlooking the traditional scene of the disaster are the ruins of a Roman watch-tower, — now used as a shelter by shepherds and robbers. If Christ related a fact and not merely a parable in His tale of the Good Samaritan, and if the location now shown to travelers is correct, it speaks poorly for the watchfulness of the Roman garrison stationed in the tower that they permitted the robbery to be committed almost at their very feet.

The country became greener as we went on. We aroused flocks of brown partridges; wild pigeons flew over our heads, and hares ran occasionally across our path. Black goats and long-haired sheep fed on the hills and in sheltered valleys, and we passed long strings of camels bringing grain to Jerusalem.

We came, soon after luncheon, to a deep ravine with a brook running at the bottom. Our road lay on a hill to the right of the ravine, and off and on we kept beside it all the afternoon. The opposite moun-

tain that formed the left wall of the gorge, was almost a precipice in steepness, a narrow path running along the side about fifty feet above the brook. Caves and overhanging rocks fringed this path; and one of the caves is believed to have been Elijah's dwelling-place during the three years during which he hid from Ahab. The stream beneath is the Brook Cherith. A little white and gray monastery perched on the cliff side and bearing a cheerful, prosperous look decidedly out of place in the dreary ravine, bears the name of "The Convent of Elijah."

Whether or not the cave shown to travelers is Elijah's real hiding-place, it is at least certain that somewhere in the gorge the Prophet lived and was fed, — fed, as translation has it, by ravens.

The same word in Hebrew stands for "Arab" and for "raven;" so there is no reason for choosing the more improbable of the two words and believing that the Prophet was fed by carrion birds.

The wilderness and desert tribes have been noted through all ages for their boundless hospitality; their unwritten laws, as I said in my chapter on the Bedouins, force them to give protection and food to any fugitive from justice who may come to them. As they are almost always at odds with the government, they are glad to aid its enemies or victims; so it is more than probable that when Elijah, flying from the king, came to their country, not the ravens, but the "Arabs" brought him bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening.

We read that when "the brook was dried up because there was no rain in the land," the Prophet was told to

go to Zarephath. The miraculous birds who could bring him "bread and flesh" from the desert, surely would have been at no loss to bring water as well; but the desert tribes would, in time of drought, have found themselves helpless to aid their *protégé*.

Some early translator, wishing no doubt, to bring in a miracle whenever there was the slightest opportunity for one, used the word "raven" instead of the more natural term "Arab," and so the translation has stood and probably will continue to stand for all time.

The brook's sides are lined with long green grass and bushes, often hiding it so that a chance glint of sunlit water is the only sign of its presence.

A little before sunset we rode down the last hill into the rich plain of Jericho.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DEAD SEA FRUIT — MODERN JERICHO — THE DEAD SEA — THE JORDAN.

IN the Plain of Jericho we found even richer foliage than in the Meadow of the Three Thousand. Thorn bushes and shrubs of all sorts were growing fresh after the rain, and acacia blossoms filled the air with fragrance. Herds of camels and sheep wandered picturesquely about, cropping grass, or rested under the shade of the low trees.

To the north lay Gilead, famous of old for its balm, and other well-known sites dotted the plain.

When Antony, having left Cleopatra for Octavia, wished to return to his old love, he deeded to her and to the Egyptian crown, by way of peace-offering, this Plain of Jericho, then one of the richest valleys in the world.

We crossed the dry bed of a broad river under the arches of a modern stone aqueduct, and rode to the top of a little hill on the other side, where stood our camp. Near the camp were bushes laden with yellow, tomato-like fruit. I picked some of the fruit and bit into it. It was dry and almost filled with seeds, and had a sour

astringent flavor that left a bad taste in my mouth for hours. This was the celebrated "Dead Sea Fruit," found only in the Jericho region. A single taste enabled me henceforth to understand the depth of the expression, "Apples of Sodom."

The Dead Sea itself, several miles to the southwest, was in full sight; and a long twisting line of trees running north from the midst of the "Sea" showed the course of Jordan. Beyond the line of trees lay the Land of Moab. We could see a flat plain reaching back a short distance, then rising abruptly to a range of tall mountains, the Mountains of Moab, that we had seen from Bethlehem. These mountains run parallel with the general course of Jordan and are in the afternoon plainly visible from Jerusalem itself. They look in the distance not unlike the Hudson palisades.

Opposite our camp one mountain stood slightly higher and more prominent than the rest. This was —

"Nebo's lonely mountain,"

and the highest peak —

"Pisgah's lofty height,"

from which, after forty years' wandering and privation in the wilderness, Moses looked down on the Promised Land. A fair sight it must have been, this rich valley with its date-palms and clear rivers, backed by mighty hills that were in those times as fertile perhaps as the valley itself.

I like to fancy that Moses first looked on the scene at an hour when it was filled with the glow of sunset. It is more beautiful then than at any other time.

"It was hard for Moses to die just at the threshold

of the Promised Land," said David as we stood looking at the sunset, "but I think it was better for him. He saw the new country, and thought Israel's sufferings were over. He was happier in not living to see the trouble and wars that followed their coming. Moses was not a warrior."

A mound with a collection of stones and broken pot-

Ancient Jericho.

tery under the surface is all that remains of ancient Jericho. Near the mound is a stone-lined pool, called the Fountain of Elisha. This and a hut or two in the neighborhood are the only signs of human workmanship in what was once the greatest city in all the plain.

The modern town of Jericho lies more than a mile to the east, and consists of thatched mud and stone sheds,

where natives live, a hospice, an ugly modern hotel, and a high four-walled structure said to be the house wherein Zaccheus entertained our Lord. When this building falls in, and its ruins can no longer be exhibited, the tradition will probably pass on to the hotel.

Shaded lanes, orchards, and orange-groves lie on all sides about the ugly little town, cactus hedges wall in rich pastures; and here and there a bit of rustic work or a wooden gate with a rude cross over it may be seen.

As David and I rode past the town, a negro boy gayly dressed galloped by on a donkey, closely pursued by our taciturn guide, the Sheik. A moment after passing us the Bedouin caught up with his quarry, and without checking his horse's pace, seized the boy by the neck — lifting him, Absalom-like, so that his donkey ran from under him — and flung him in a heap on the stony road.

We learned afterward that the negro had tried to steal some of John's cooking outfit, and being discovered in the act, had fled. The Sheik hearing of it had followed up the fugitive — with the result we had just witnessed. He stood over his victim, as we rode up, looking as proud of the exploit as though he had brought down the Beast of Revelation. When we applauded his strength and horsemanship, he looked still more pleased, and smiled for the first time since he had joined us.

We stayed about Jericho and the Jordan for several days, for the weather was fine and we had much to see. Often in the evening David would have the dining-tent decked with great, fruit-laden boughs from orange and

sweet-lemon trees. The Jericho oranges, when fresh, are quite good, but cannot compare with those of Jaffa, which are said to be the best in the world — Floridas not excepted. The sweet lemons I never tasted elsewhere. They are slightly insipid and bear a trace of the ordinary lemon's flavor without the acidity.

The day after our arrival we set out with the luncheon tent, for a visit to the Dead Sea. As we neared the "Sea," verdure ceased almost entirely, and was replaced by huge patches of white salt. This salt is a government monopoly, and men are sent at certain seasons to gather it. The grass was quite displaced by salt near the water's edge.

We dismounted near a hut of boughs, the dwelling-place of two government *employés* whose business it is to gather lumps of bitumen as they rise to the surface of the water after a storm and to prevent peasants from stealing salt from the adjacent fields. Two boats recently placed there by order of the Sultan were moored before the hut.

I had read so many conflicting accounts of the sensations and difficulties connected with bathing in the Dead Sea, that I resolved to try a plunge and find out for myself what it was like.

One man had told me of a friend of his who once tried to dive here, and who, having got his head under water, could not raise it again, and so was drowned. Another man had said the salt and bitumen left a stinging and soreness over the whole surface of the body.

As I visited the place in January, the water was not exactly warm, but I enjoyed the swim for all that. At least a third of the body is out of water in floating; this

peculiar buoyancy makes fast swimming an impossibility, for in the racing stroke the feet are more often in air than in water. It is extremely difficult to dive, and swimming under water is out of the question.

When I had finished my bath and come to the shore again, the water dried quickly and I looked like the land about the sea: my hair and beard were white with salt, and days passed before I was quite free from it.

Ten minutes' ride brought us to a plantation of high bushes that gave forth a sweet, pungent odor. Riding through these to a second plantation of feathery reeds, we found ourselves on the edge of Jordan, where we were to lunch. We were at the spot where the tribes are said to have crossed, and where many authorities claim that Christ was baptized. If either of these claims be true, the river bed must necessarily have changed greatly in the past eighteen hundred years, for at present the current is very swift, the water is yellow and turbulent, and sweeps strongly around the curve just above the "crossing place."

Wishing to get rid of the salt and of a mucilaginous feeling caused by my late swim, I followed the counsel given Naaman the Syrian, and "dipped seven times in Jordan"; like the Syrian captain, I went in white as snow and came out — partially cleansed. The water was at least thirty degrees colder than in the Dead Sea, and the current too strong for comfort. I swam across with some difficulty, and was about to land when David shouted from the opposite shore that the bank I had nearly reached was one great quicksand. Accordingly, I swam back again and landed half-frozen, wondering if the water was as cold in the days of Joshua. If it was,

The River Jordan.

we might forgive the Hebrews if they had hesitated to cross.

Reeds grow thickly on either bank, and near the curve of the river join with vines and trees in forming a jungle, where wild boars are often found. Trees of all sorts overhang the stream, giving it the look of one of our own mountain creeks. Sycamores, too, are plentiful in this region; these are seldom straight, but slant as a rule at an angle of from forty-five to ninety degrees. I have seen some of these sycamore-trees where the rise is so gradual that a man might easily walk up the trunk to the topmost bough. Such a tree, slanting over the highroad, Zaccheus doubtless climbed to watch Christ pass by.

The Dead Sea at one time covered much of the Plain of Jericho; beaches have been found showing that the water was once at least six hundred feet above its present level. The sea is at present only fifty miles long and fifteen miles in width. On the eastern side high mountains come down to the water's edge. The western slope is more gradual.

The sites of Zoar and other "cities of the plain" are still visible, and, in the valley to the south of the sea, where salt has collected in heaps and rough columns, the untiring tradition-hunter points out the pillar of salt that was once Lot's wife. The tradition-hunter has not stopped there, but has christened a mountain above Jericho "The Mount of Temptation," and declares the summit to be the one from which Satan showed our Lord "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." "The world" at that time must have been somewhat limited and compact, since the eye from such

a height can cover a radius of little more than fifty miles.

We read of the solemn desolation of the Dead Sea; of its dismal, poisonous waters, and the power of the fumes to kill the very birds that try to fly over it. My own impression of the place was different. The water, deep-blue in the sun, is as clear as any I have ever seen, and being open on three sides, the bright surface is constantly ruffled by a breeze. The land immediately about it is barren, for no crops can be raised in the salt-strewn ground; but it is hemmed in by one of the richest valleys and by the most stately hills in all Palestine.

Most hymn-writers who have described it — and from whom we draw more largely than we realize for our ideas of the Holy Land — have never visited the East. Hence their descriptions are purely imaginary and based on the sea's name alone, — a name which I admit does not promise much in the line of cheerfulness or of beauty.

The Dead Sea.

CHAPTER XXX.

AROUND THE CAMP-FIRE — TALES AND SONGS OF THE CAMP.

DAVID had ordered a gigantic camp-fire to be built on our last night at Jericho. I was still lingering over my coffee that evening when the dragoman appeared at the dining-tent door.

"Serkeese has been moved to tell a story, sir," he said, laughing. "He is in the middle of it now. Should you like to hear him?"

Looking out I saw a crowd of men seated about the roaring fire,— muleteers and other servants, John, Imbarak, an old Bedouin (poet of his tribe), the young Sheik who escorted us, and two guards. All were looking toward the head of the ring, where the redoubtable Serkeese, having installed himself on a heap of saddles and blankets, was holding forth in what seemed, to judge from his gestures and occasional howls, to be nothing less than a tale of war and murder.

As we lay back in our sea-chairs just outside the circle, I asked David how many enemies the hero of the story had killed thus far.

"It's not that sort of story, sir," he answered. "It deals with love — what you call a romance; of a poor young man who is in love with a prince's daughter."

His words were drowned by Serkeese, who at this point emitted a succession of prolonged screams, leaping up and throwing his arms about.

"Is he having a fit, David?" I inquired in real anxiety.

"Oh no, sir. The young hero — "

"Has begun fighting at last?" I interrupted. "I knew he was bound to get at it sooner or later. These Oriental heroes of yours will end by depopulating your country if they keep on."

"Excuse me, sir, there is no fight in this story," said David, with some dignity. "I have heard it told before, so I know. The part you thought was a fight was where the hero tells the prince how dearly he loves the young princess. Shall I translate as the boy goes on?"

I declined his offer, preferring to study the listening group undisturbed. The firelight shone red on the crowd of eager figures as they leaned forward in various attitudes to catch each word; the picture formed by the dark faces and the white, scarlet, and yellow costumes relieved by flashes of light reflected from dirk, pistol, and sword, was one not easily forgotten.

The muleteers — common stablemen from Jerusalem khans — were all attention, repeating under their breath each sentence Serkeese spoke. The guards, who were simple country fellows unused to such excitement, listened delightedly, nudging each other in ecstasy whenever some specially ear-splitting yell issued from the speaker's cave-like mouth. The Sheik lay almost

at full length, chin on hand, eyes half shut, and with an indifferent, disdainful look on his high-bred face; for what interest had he, a prince, in the company and stories of these servants? Yet I noticed that when any interesting or exciting point of the tale was reached, his hands would clench, and he glanced eagerly toward Serkeese. The Bedouin bard seemed not to hear. His gray beard was buried in the breast-folds of his abieh and his lips moved noiselessly.

"He is composing," explained David. "We shall hear his composition when the story is finished."

Half an hour more was taken up in pacifying the stern father and in bringing hero and heroine to a proper understanding; then, with one long, last, lingering howl, the narrator glanced triumphantly about the ring, and leaned back to listen to such feeble efforts as might follow his masterpiece.

There was no applause, and, absorbed as his hearers had been in the story, the moment Serkeese finished they seemed to dismiss the whole subject from their minds and to wait for something else.

The old poet did not keep them waiting long. Raising his head and looking straight into the fire, he began to sing, at first slowly and reflectively as if spelling out words from among the flames; then, as the song went on, his voice increased in volume, and he ended with a shout, clear and strong like a war-cry. He made no gestures, but as he sang, the bent figure and wrinkled face seemed in the firelight to expand, and to gather dignity and strength. The song was shorter than Serkeese's story, and had a somewhat novel plot. I will give a brief outline of it.

A Bedouin girl was stolen by a hostile tribe. The Sheik of her tribe called on his warriors to go forth against the abductors and bring her back. There were many young men and boys in his tribe who he thought would be of no use in battle; so he decreed that none should go on the expedition except men whose beards were of such a length that the heavy wooden beard-comb used among Bedouins would hang unsupported in them. Now the lover of the stolen girl was but a mere boy, and had no beard. Fearing, therefore, that he must remain in the tents with the women while his tribesmen went to war, and fearing to lose his sweetheart's love if he were not among her rescuers, he seized a beard-comb, and with all his force drove the sharp teeth into his bare chin, leaving it sticking there, and appearing thus before the Sheik with the demand that he should be allowed to join the other warriors. The Sheik, pleased with the boy's pluck, gave the desired permission. His order "Go forth!" was the shout that ended the song.

"The old chap looks like a warrior himself, just now," I remarked as he finished.

"He was one, once," replied David. "He had a war story of his own. Maybe you'd like to hear it, sir? His was a true story and not a song."

I assured the dragoman that I should like to hear it, — most of David's stories were well worth listening to, — and he began: —

"This man and his elder brother lived years ago in the Land of Moab. The brother was Sheik of his tribe, and the fiercest, strongest warrior in all the country. The poet here was much younger — little more than a boy. The two brothers loved each other dearly.

The Sheik had a quarrel with another tribe near by, and whenever he came upon one or two, or even three, men of that tribe, he would attack them. He always either killed them or put them to flight, for no two men dared stand against him.

"Well, one day when he was riding alone, he met two shepherds of the tribe tending their flocks. He rode at them immediately with his sword drawn; it made little difference to him what sort of men he killed so long as they were his enemies. In battle he had been fired at and missed so often that people had begun to believe he was bullet-proof. Nevertheless, this day as he came near, one of the shepherds, knowing he must be killed in any case, and preferring to die fighting, raised his gun and fired at the Sheik. The gun had been carelessly aimed, but the ball struck the Sheik in the breast and killed him immediately.

"His brother found the body and collected his men against the shepherd's tribe. The man who had shot the Sheik had been so proud of his act that he had boasted of it everywhere, so the brother soon knew what tribe to attack."

"Don't say he killed a hundred men by himself in the fight, please!" I begged, thinking it was a repetition of the old story.

"I don't know about that, sir, but his tribe certainly defeated their enemies in the battle, and the poet fought hard. My father, who was guest there at the time, has told me that when the young man came back after routing the other tribe, his hand was so tightly closed on his sword-hilt that they had to bathe it in warm water

and rub it before it could be unclasped. He had struck so hard and so often that the hand was paralyzed for the time. Don't you remember another case like that in the story of King David's strong men, where Eleazer 'arose and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary and his hand clave unto his sword'?

"The young man would have been by rights Sheik of the tribe, now that his brother was dead, and especially since he had proved himself such a good fighter, but he refused to become Sheik; either his brother's death or a sword-cut he received on the head during the battle seemed to craze him. He would not live with his tribe any longer, but left them and wandered about the country, sometimes stopping at one place, sometimes at another, but never staying in any one spot long.

"Wherever he went, his reputation as a warrior gave him a welcome; besides, since he had become a little mad, he had learned to compose songs, and men liked to hear him. So he got the name of being a poet, and for over forty years he has wandered from one end of Syria to the other. He still speaks of his brother as if he were alive. I thought it might amuse you to see him, so, when I found he was in the neighborhood, I sent him word to come here to-night."

The fire was dying out; the crowd around it had dispersed, and most of them already lay wrapped, mound-like, in blankets, snoring loudly. The guards had gone for fresh fuel, and Imbarak and John had retired to the kitchen tent.

The old Bedouin sat alone by the dying fire; his arms were crossed and his face — the fever of inspi-

ration all faded from it — was once more sad and wrinkled. His eyes were still fixed on the embers and his lips moved silently. As I was going to sleep that night, I looked through the tent door and saw him in the same position.

In the morning when we awoke he was gone, — having had, however, the forethought in his sorrow-laden mind to carry away with him a pair of chickens and some of the muleteers' bread; — possibly the Bedouin fashion of expressing grief.

We started back to Jerusalem early the same morning. The weather in the low-lying valley had been ideal, and I had begun to think that at length "the winter was past and the rain was over and gone." We had scarcely left the Khan of the Good Samaritan on our homeward trip when the skies, for some hours past clouded and lowering, poured down a flood of rain that more than made up for all past deficiencies. We galloped on through the heaviest storm I had yet known in Palestine, and in our old-time drenched condition pulled up for luncheon, after a long ride, at the khan by the Apostles' Fountain. Here David ordered a large fire of thorn bushes to be kindled, and by its heat we became somewhat more comfortable.

These thorn-bushes grow thickly all through Syria, and form the natives' principal item of fuel. They stand about a foot high and are nearly eighteen inches in diameter; they have no stalk but are made up of a mass of sharp thorns. When dried they burn like tinder, quickly and with incessant crackling. Having once heard the noise they make in burning, it is easy for one to understand the simile of "the crackling of thorns

under a pot." Peasant women gather thorn-bushes in bundles, sometimes six feet square, which they carry on their heads.

I heard a Bible scholar once say he believed it was a little bush of this sort that one of the Roman guard pulled up on the way to Calvary and placed on Our Lord's head. A rough practical joke of that sort would surely be more in keeping with the character of the Roman soldiery than would the tedious plaiting of a crown of ordinary thorns.

A tree bearing long green thorns is shown in the road from Jordan as having grown from a slip of the tree whose thorns were used for Christ's crown, — a sacred version of "The House that Jack built" that finds much favor among devotees, many of whom bear away boughs of the tree as relics.

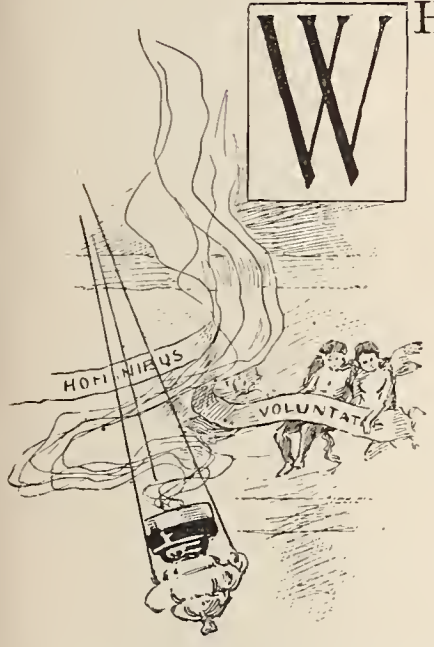
After the pile of thorn-bushes was lighted at the khan, our host produced a bottle of good French brandy which was kept here for the use of travelers. Under the combined influences of brandy and fire, the tumble-down khan, with streams of water pouring through the ill-thatched roof, became quite a cheerful place in contrast to the outer torrent of rain and the flooded road.

Luncheon over, we started on the last stage of our journey, Massoud's gaudily-dyed wet saddle cloth imprinting, *en route*, beautiful patterns on my mackintosh and riding trousers.

I was fated, it seemed, to enter the Holy City at all times in some bizarre fashion. To-day, fortunately, the rain kept all tourists in-doors; and, drenched, cold, and tired, but unobserved, I gained the hotel and my own room.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MAR SABA — GREEK CHRISTMAS AT BETHLEHEM — HEBRON.



WHEN the skies cleared once more we started on a pilgrimage to Mar Saba.

We traversed, after leaving Jerusalem, some miles of regulation valley, closed in on either side by stony gray hills; then we came to rising ground and soon struck a mountain road that led upward by a succession of step-like ledges. Rocks overhung our road on one side, and shadows from high mountains darkened it. On the other side was a deep gorge or chasm; a sheer drop for hundreds of feet. Across the gorge, forming one of the walls, and higher than that on our own side, rose a precipice brown and somber, and honeycombed by tens of thousands of caves. Somewhere in this hideous wilderness, in one of the caves, John the Baptist once lived, sleeping among the rocks, wearing the hide of beasts, and eating wild honey and locusts. He certainly chose a fitting spot for meditation and quiet, for little of the outer world could penetrate here or distract the mind. So evidently thought other men, and, following John's footsteps, came myriads of hermits from all parts of

the world to settle here in caves and live as ascetics. Here also came a horde of Persian soldiers, swarming over the sides of the rock, sword in hand, searching every cave, massacring the holy men by thousands, and throwing their bodies into the chasm beneath. A grand hunt it was, man against man, changing for the moment the somber precipice into a vast charnel house.

It was late in the afternoon as we went over this road. Darkness had already crept along the bottom of the gorge, and the evening hush was broken only by the low whistling of innumerable orange-and-black birds as they flew to their nests on the rock. The technical name for these birds is "grackle"; they are found only in the region of Mar Saba and the Dead Sea; they are about the size of an American robin and are marked like our own red-winged blackbird.

Behind us, as we mounted higher on the road, we saw a tall bare mountain — El Muntar (the Watch Tower). It was to this mountain, say many authorities, that the scapegoat bearing the sins of Israel was led yearly to perish. One of my fellow-guests at the Grand, in talking of the ancient custom, a few days before, had remarked that "it seemed a pity to have spoiled a good goat just for the sake of getting rid of a lot of Jewish sins."

The winding mountain-track brought us at last to the monastery of Mar Saba (Arabic for St. Saba). To this spot, in the middle of the fifth century, came Saint Saba at the age of eighteen, to spend the rest of his days as a hermit and an ascetic. Legends tell us that at first his only companion was a lion who shared his cave and

food. Little by little other hermits joined him, and at last the monastery of St. Saba — the oldest in the world — was built.

It is still in perfect preservation, hanging far out over the precipice side; the high outer walls and turrets giving it rather the look of a mediæval castle than of a home for monks.

A few rods higher up the rock, directly above the monastery walls, stands a tower built in the time of Justinian and now used as a sleeping-place for feminine pilgrims. As is the rule governing all such houses, no women are admitted within the walls of Mar Saba.

The monastery belongs to the Greek Church, and is a sort of penal settlement for refractory monks. When a priest gets himself into trouble by murder, by theft, or by meddling with politics, he is packed off to the wilderness and forced to live in this rigidly kept prison-convent. I saw there, in consequence, as perfect a collection of cut-throats, and as bad a set of faces, as could be found in any jail in the land.

The brethren pass such time as is allowed them from religious services and discipline, in carving souvenirs, such as salad-forks and spoons, cane-heads, rosaries, etc., which they sell to tourists. Rumor hath it, that once in a while some ungodly howaji presents some of them with a flask of liquor, which they smuggle cautiously into the monastery and proceed forthwith to lay themselves open to fresh discipline.

We camped in a glen a quarter of a mile beyond the walls. One or two monks brought curios for sale, but, except for these, we were free from visitors.

The morning after our first arrival David and I went

through the monastery. We entered a large courtyard. In the center was a stone chapel containing a single room whose shrine, chandelier, and ornaments were all of silver. One or two flashy prints hung on the walls, and spoiled what might otherwise have been a fine effect.

Crossing the yard we entered the main building; this we found furnished with strict, almost mean plainness; there was about it, despite its well-kept condition, an air of squalor. The brethren, with their greasy black gowns, their coarse faces, and the long stringy hair that escaped from under their inverted tile hats, did not lessen the squalid aspect of the place.

I was led, as a crowning glory, up many flights of steps and through rock corridors to a dirty little cave in which, as one of the monks told me in very bad Latin, Mar Saba and the lion had lived.

We stopped on the way out at a flat parapet that jutted directly over the gorge. As we came to this parapet hundreds of black-and-orange birds flocked about us from all sides to be fed. David produced a bag of raisins and cut-up figs which we threw to them. Each piece was caught in mid-air. The recipients of this food were perfectly tame and flocked about us with as little fear as is shown by the pigeons at St. Mark's in Venice. We stood at the edge of the parapet and threw morsels of figs or raisins down into the ravine. The distance to the bottom was several hundred feet, and of all the pieces of food that we threw not one reached the ground. As soon as a raisin left our hands a dozen birds would start after it. Sometimes a piece would be missed at first; when this happened the pursuers would dart under it and try to catch it as it came down to

them. Often this manœuvre would be repeated half a dozen times before a raisin was caught, but it was always successful in the end. These birds form the only pleasant phase of life in the dreary neighborhood and drearier monastery.

Leaving Mar Saba, we once more had a glimpse of Hermon, white-headed as ever, far to the north. We rode northwest through the hills toward Bethlehem, for we wished to witness the Greek Christmas-service held there that day. After a slow journey over rough ground we reached the outskirts of Bethlehem, and camped in an olive-shaded level place known as the Field of Boaz. We left our horses here and went on foot to the city, arriving at the Greek Church a little before sunset.

The Greek Christmas (Latin Epiphany) is in its way as interesting as the ceremonies on December 25th. Pilgrims of the Greek Church come from Russia and Greece and even from far-away Switzerland to attend the Epiphany Christmas-service, traveling on foot and arriving footsore, ragged, and half-starved. I have forgotten exactly how many sins are crossed off the sacred "score" by this pilgrimage. For days past we had seen the devotees singly and in parties trudging toward Bethlehem. Most of them were Russians; the women with lined, patient faces and shapeless figures, wearing huge flat shoes and coarse dresses; the men, bovine, stupid fellows, rough-haired, and in all sorts of costumes from furs of Siberia down to threadbare semi-European black suits. Both sexes were, as a rule, of large stature.

Stalls had been set up inside the church, at which, as we entered, a throng of pilgrims was buying colored and pictured candles of all sizes; these candles they

promptly lighted as soon as they were bought, and the numberless twinkling lights they shed filled the gloomy space with brightness.

The peasants looked on their surroundings with holy awe, kneeling reverently before each altar and sacred relic. Many wept profusely at the Grotto of the Nativity.

I remember one Russian peasant especially, both because of his picturesque appearance and of his devoutness. He seemed about twenty-five years old; he was a giant in height and breadth, and had a great shock of yellow hair that rose above and surrounded his head, shining in the candle-light like a golden halo. He wore thigh-boots and a fur-trimmed jacket. His fur cap was in one hand, and in the other he held a thick lighted candle that was covered with pictures representing the Nativity, the Adoration, and the Crucifixion. He kissed these pictures, one by one, from time to time, his simple, unintelligent face and blue eyes alight with a sort of ecstasy. A feeble old woman held one of his arms, and once or twice he gave her the candle to kiss. An observer has only to go among these peasants and note their simplicity and their credulous love for sacred things to believe all accounts of their behavior at Easter when the "heaven-sent fire" is shown. The Greek Christmas rites are much the same as those of the Latins, but somewhat less elaborate, and, to me, less impressive.

We came upon Domian, Jamal's partner (a first-rate dragoman, and perhaps the handsomest man in Palestine) on our way from the church. He is a Greek by birth and religion. I asked if he were not going to attend mass.

Pilgrims entering Bethlehem at Christmas-time

"Not now, sir," he replied. "I am on a round of visits to certain friends. We Greeks here in Syria have a custom of calling, Christmas day, on any of our friends who chance to be named Asa. For according to our faith, 'Asa' is one of the names of Jesus; and we go to-day to pay our respects to all who bear that name."

FOUNTAIN OF SOLOMON.

We left Bethlehem next morning for Hebron. A carriage-road lies all the way from Hebron to Jerusalem and is one of the favorite drives in the vicinity. A few miles beyond Bethlehem we came to the sealed fountains of Solomon. These are three in number, and still furnish water for the neighborhood. Several women were at work at one of the pools as we

passed; some washing clothes, and others filling goat-skins with water to carry home.

Skins are the favorite receptacles for water in the East. An ordinary untanned goat, pig, or even a donkey skin is taken, the openings at the legs and neck are plugged up, and behold! the receptacle is complete. Water that is carried in these skins for all distances and in the hottest weather, is sometimes — strange as it may seem — not exactly palatable to untrained foreigners.

The water of the sealed fountains is not clear, and each fountain is surrounded by a dirty stone wall. They were doubtless more inviting at the time that Solomon praised them in his Song.

I had heard much of the vineyards of Hebron and had drunk the celebrated Hebron wine; so that I expected from all accounts to see the place fairly embowered with vines. Several miles before we reached the town itself we came to the vineyards. They are terraced and lie on all sides about Hebron. Like the vineyards of the Rhine, they consist merely of lines of charred-looking bent stakes.

Small huts and towers are placed at intervals among them, where, in the season, keepers are set to guard the vines. Such guard duty is by no means easy, as patient and often perilous watch must be kept. The "watch-towers" of the keepers are in many cases mere booths, little stronger than "blinds," built of boughs. These huts or "towers" are referred to in the text: "He buildeth his house . . . as a booth that the keeper maketh," and in Isaiah's comparison between weak Jerusalem and "a booth in a vineyard." The vine-

keeper's duties may also have been referred to by the Psalmist in the verse, "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

A mile to the west of Hebron stands a Roman hospice or *gasthaus*, for the accommodation of pilgrims who wish to visit Jutta, the traditional birthplace of John the Baptist, which is near by. Before the hospice is a large evergreen oak, which is pointed out as the tree under which Abraham lived at Mamre. This tree must be almost four hundred years old; the story connected with it deserves therefore more credence than do most Palestine traditions.

Hebron, perhaps the most thoroughly Moslem city in Syria, is built on the south slope of a hill; and has a population of nearly eighteen thousand, of whom only five persons are Christians. Two hundred more are Jews and the rest Mohammedans.

Native Christians and tourists are soon made to feel how unwelcome they are, for the Hebronites take little trouble to conceal their dislike for outsiders of other faiths. The Jews who live in Hebron make money — somewhat precariously it is true — by usury and other trades dear to the Israelitish heart, and therefore, despite the thousand insults and abuses daily heaped on them by the lords of the soil, remain there in preference to going to other towns in which they might gain more toleration but less wealth.

Glass-making is the main industry of Hebron. This single town once furnished the whole East with glass; even now, though the trade is much restricted, its workshops turn out large quantities of glass ornaments, rosaries, etc.

Many of the streets are mere tunnels with houses built overhead; many more are covered with straw mats and thatches. Nearly all are uncleaned and malodorous.

We went first to see the Cave of Machpelah, where Abraham is buried. The Mosque of Abraham, which none but Moslems may enter, is built over this. The Prince of Wales and his party, including Dean Stanley (who has written an account of it), General Lew Wallace — by special permit of the Sultan — and one or two other favored beings are the only Christians who in modern times have seen the interior. They report it as dark and unsightly.

The mosque itself is a gray stone quadrangle, with a flight of steps leading up to the entrance. Christians are allowed to walk up to a certain step in this flight, but must stop there. While there is no truth in the story that death at the hands of an infuriated mob awaits the bold spirit who goes farther and enters the sacred mosque, yet the chances are that unpleasant consequences would arise, — and in the East unpleasant consequences should if possible be avoided.

An English missionary and his wife have come to Hebron during the past few years and settled there. The missionary is a hopeless cripple and his wife is blind; but the two labor cheerfully at their self-appointed task of making life more endurable among the poor, and have formed classes for teaching children to sew and to read. Poor themselves, and badly hampered by physical infirmities, they carry on this work on their own account, unsupported by any board of missions.

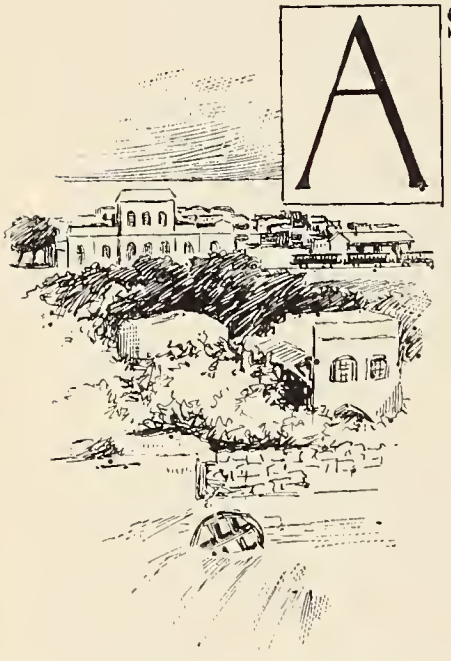
David was well known and liked in Hebron, because of the trade he brought there; so I was not subjected to the annoyances that await many tourists. The town, probably because of its aversion to outside influences, is less advanced than other Syrian cities. This same aversion — in a more or less modified form — will account for the lack of progress and of touch with the outer world noticeable throughout all Syria. The country is a problem by itself. Its present compared with its past, promises little hope of future improvement. So far as the political future is concerned, I confess I am not wise enough to give any new or sensible light on the subject. But whatever that future may be, it surely does not, as many philanthropists believe, lie in the hands of the Jews. Such Hebrew colonies as have been sent out have proved themselves, as a rule, lazy, visionary, and lacking in ability.

The Turks will not improve the land; all additions — diligence roads, railways, etc. — having been made by the French.

The fellaheen, Bedouins, and townsfolk, seem content to plod on as they have done for two thousand years; using old customs, old implements, and old forms of dress, with scarcely a single modern innovation. Is there any real reason to believe that they or the country will be materially different two thousand years hence?

CHAPTER XXXII.

DEPARTURE FROM JERUSALEM — THROUGH THE LAND OF THE PHILISTINES — A MAN OF GATH — JAFFA.



AS my time was limited, I had no chance to travel to any extent through the country southwest of Hebron.

One evening I bade Massoud an affectionate good-bye, which he received meekly and — as I fancied — with a gleam of repentance for past misdeeds, and I distributed the customary backsheesh among the servants. Next morning David and I started by rail for Jaffa.

An incongruous new station and European cars have lately become one of the features of the Holy City. Already the natives have picked up their Western brothers' habit of hanging about the platform at train-time; and the Western-built trains, returning the compliment, have adopted the Oriental fashion of slow moving.

Domian joined us on our way from the hotel, and when we reached the station three more figures advanced to meet us. One of the three, tall and wavering, seemed to blend with the dense fog. Him we recognized as Imbarak the mournful. His short, ro-

tund companion was John; while the weird, ghost-like creature that hopped about between the two and howled fiercely at a porter that got in his way, was Serkeese, beautified for the occasion by a new abieh and a shave.

The three had come to see me off. This pleased me greatly, since, all backsheesh having been paid, their only motive for coming could have been to wish me *bon voyage*.

The mists had cleared by the time our train entered the Valley of Elah. Here it was that the Philistines encamped against the army of Saul; and the dried brook in the center is the same, beyond doubt, from which David gathered the five white stones for his combat with Goliath.

"The Israelite army," said Jamal, pointing to the right, where the valley broadened into a plain, "probably camped about there. David would have crossed the hills over there to the left to join them. Bethlehem lies behind those hills. We are coming into the country of the Philistines, now. Their army probably came up this very gorge where the train is going. The fight between David and Goliath was somewhere along the brook."

As we traveled on, the valley grew wider, and on a hill to the far right we saw a village and the ruins of an old city.

"Those are the ruins of Zorah," said David. "The field in the valley to this side of the city is believed to be the spot where Manoah's wife saw the Angel who prophesied Samson's birth. Samson must often have walked over this country that we see now."

Since seeing the huge yellow-haired Russian peasant

in Bethlehem on the Greek Christmas, I have always imagined that Samson must have had somewhat the same appearance, and the same air of simplicity and strength.

The scenery we looked on during most of our journey by rail was like that of the rest of Palestine, — bare mountains and treeless valleys, interspersed with olive orchards, and dotted with hillside villages of mud and stone. Here and there a few vineyards or a hill that had been terraced for cultivation, broke the general monotony. Beyond a range of hills on the opposite side of the valley from Zorah lies Gaza — now a mere village surrounded by olive groves and sand dunes — whose city gates Samson once carried away.

The train stopped at Ramleh for some minutes, and we stepped out on the platform for a smoke.

Leaning idly against a post of the platform, and smoking a cigarette, stood the tallest man I ever saw outside a circus. My head scarcely came to his shoulder. He was wrapped in a woolen abieh, a blue silk kafieh, thickly worked with gold, covered his head and shoulders, and his feet were encased in soft red slippers. Gigantic as the man was, his feet seemed to be unduly large, and were unshapely even to deformity. As I looked at him he relighted his cigarette, and I saw that he had six perfectly developed fingers on each hand. I was about to call David's attention to the peculiarity when, turning suddenly, the giant saw us and saluted the dragoman as an old acquaintance. Before we had time for any talk the bell rang and we were forced to go back to the train. As we moved out of the station I looked back once more at the oddly formed

native, and to my surprise saw another man almost as tall, and also with six fingers, join him.

"Are all the inhabitants of Ramleh like that?" I asked David, pointing out this second man.

"Those two men are brothers," he answered. "They are not of Ramleh, but of Gath. They have come down to-day to receive goods by the train from Jerusalem. They are strange men, and travelers have journeyed all the way to Gath to see them. Their father, who is dead these eight years, was formed as they are; and his father before him. They claim, whether with truth or not no one knows, to be descended from the giant spoken of in Chronicles."

The dragoman drew out a little pocket-Bible — the best Baedeker for Palestine, by the way — which he constantly carried; and finding the place (1st Chronicles, 20th chapter and 6th verse) handed the book to me. I read: —

"And yet again there was war at Gath, where was a man of great stature whose fingers and toes were four and twenty; six on each hand and six on each foot" (this then explained the large misshapen feet of the man I had just seen), "and he also was the son of a giant."

"You don't mean to say that these men trace their lineage back to him?"

"They claim to, sir. As far back as men's memories go, the men of this one family have had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. They have always lived at Gath, and the earliest tradition of their family is that they are descended from the great Philistine you read of a minute ago. It may be true; it may not.

The family is rich and has always kept together. Only these two brothers now are left; neither has any children. Many other families in Gath and Ascalon claim to be descended from the Philistines of old and still call themselves Philistines; just as you saw the sect of Jews in Jerusalem who still call themselves Pharisees and who attend a separate synagogue where Pharisaical services are held."

The railway over which we were traveling had been laid out with the idea of avoiding as many hills as possible, and was twisted therefore in many cases into the shape of a corkscrew, or doubled like an Alpine tunnel-road. The next station was Lydda, the place in which Peter raised the sick girl. It is now a large and modern-looking town. Passing on we came to the village of Ashdod, where Dagon's image was once found broken and overthrown. As we neared the sea the air grew warmer, and the verdure freshened greatly. We passed through a succession of orange-groves, and, three hours after leaving Jerusalem, stopped at the Jaffa station.

Jaffa (the "High," or the "Beautiful") is very old. It was first given by Joshua to the tribe of Dan, and after many changes was made Jewish by the Maccabæii. It is now noted for having the sweetest oranges and the worst harbor in the world. The former claim is open to doubt, but I can vouch for the truth of the latter.

The town proper is built on the side of a steep hill overlooking the Mediterranean. Most of the houses face the east (or landward), so that to any one passing at night by sea scarcely a light is visible. Something — perhaps the broadness and tolerable paving of some of the streets, perhaps the vines and balconies — gives Jaffa

a more European air than is possessed by any other Syrian city. It had seemed to me from my former bird's-eye view on my way to Beirût, utterly Oriental. Now, however, I could see traces of Greek, French, and Egyptian influence that gave the place a thoroughly cosmopolitan aspect.

The population is estimated at from eight to fifteen thousand inhabitants, of whom more than five hundred are Europeans. The outskirts of the town are made up of orange-groves and vineyards, with an indiscriminate smattering of villas and adobe huts. Rows of cactus hedge fringe the roadway. Each orange-grove is provided with a waterwheel. These wheels are similar to those seen in Egypt near Heliopolis and along the Nile, and are turned by means of a long wooden beam to which an ox, a donkey, or a buffalo is harnessed. The wheels themselves, like that at the Dothan mill, are covered with earthen jars, which, coming up full, empty themselves into large troughs. The troughs connect with a stream that irrigates the whole orchard.

The residence streets of the town are broad and have long, heavily-latticed windows that project over the street. The latticed window originated in the East, and was used as far back as the time when the mother of Sisera, watching for her son's return, cried through the lattice: "Why is his chariot so long in coming?"

The main business street, lined with stalls and bazaars, is also very broad, but is choked with strings of mangy, unwashed camels, and with beggars and hucksters, while an army of scavenger dogs are always getting under the feet of passers-by. Narrow alleys, some arched over, almost all tortuous and steep, wriggle

away from the street toward the water. A broad sand-beach lies on either side of the town, and a broken-down apology for a breakwater rises at some distance from the shore.

The harbor is, as I have said, probably the worst in the world. When the water is at all rough, landing becomes almost an impossibility; while, in a gale, vessels make no attempt to send boats ashore, but carry mail, freight, express and passengers along to Beirût or to Port Saïd, as the case may be, bringing them back on the next trip. Should the water still be heavy when they pass that way again, no landing is made, and all imports are carried (owners paying) on, until some time when the water is smooth enough for boats to transport them safely to shore. Thus, frequently, dwellers at Jerusalem are forced to wait a week or more for their mail, and perishable merchandise is frequently ruined.

I once saw an unfortunate sheep-merchant tear his clothes, throw dust on his head, and offer up a series of universal and comprehensive curses, because a large cargo of sheep that he had shipped at great expense from Alexandretta (a small town on the north Syrian coast) to Jaffa, could not be landed on account of a storm, and had to be carried on to Alexandria, Egypt, and thence back again. The merchant was not only obliged to pay extra freight, but also, as he had only fodder enough to last from Alexandria to Jaffa, lost several sheep on the way from starvation.

Several lines of steamers, unless stopped by quarantine, pass Jaffa weekly. The best of these lines are the Messageries Maritimes, the Khedivial, and the Austrian Lloyd.

JAFFA.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

JAFFA HARBOR — "'TWIXT THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP SEA" — A BAD QUARTER OF AN HOUR — ON BOARD.

SEVERAL people were going to sail from Jaffa on the same steamer — a Khedivial boat — that I expected to take. A strong wind had blown all day, and the night before I had heard the booming of surf along the beach. The steamer was due at three in the afternoon.

That morning a boat-load of people had tried to land from a passing ship and had capsized; one of the party — a little girl six years old — had been lost. She had either been drowned or killed by sharks, many of whom infest the harbor. The others were rescued by Cook's boatmen.

The prospect of embarkation after we heard of the morning's adventure, was, to say the least, scarcely enlivening. By way of making matters worse, the wind increased fifty per cent as the day wore on.

David was full of concern; trying to prevent me from hearing of the drowning episode — not an easy matter, since all Jaffa was talking about it; — and advising me not to sail on any consideration.

Unfortunately no other steamer for Egypt was to pass for over a week; so I was in much the same position as the fox, in the Southern planter's story, who climbed a tree; the narrator of the tale giving, as a reason for the fox's having performed this impossible feat: "He *had* to climb! *The dogs were after him!*"

I was due in Egypt before the end of the week; I was therefore forced to take the first steamer I could get. David, finding all protestations useless, set sorrowfully about the task of getting my luggage through the custom house, an operation in which, in Syria as in most other countries, the glitter of silver blinds the official eye to many contraband exports.

We outgoers were finishing lunch at Howard's Hotel at one o'clock: an Englishman who had conscientiously taken two helps of everything, three French tourists (two men and a woman), and five Americans — making nine guests in all. We were all going on the afternoon boat. The Englishman, a long tortoise-like being with a *blasé* expression, was holding forth on the advantages of eating a hearty meal before going to sea. I had eaten hearty meals and I knew the effect; I also knew how the boat would rock to-day. But, like the four other Americans, I said nothing.

One of the two Frenchmen — M. Jules La Roche, Marseilles, France, as the hotel register had it — was telling his wife patronizingly in his own tongue, utterly oblivious of the fact that some of us might possibly understand French, how foolish these Englishmen and Americans were to fear the sea on so bright a day. "There was no danger; or if there was, why, *nom de Dieu!* who feared it?"

In the midst of the international scene we were interrupted by David's entrance. He came to tell me that the steamer was ahead of time, that it was already in the offing, and that it could not land. If I still insisted on sailing, it would be necessary for me to go out in a rowboat, meet the steamer as she came down, and be lifted aboard. Moreover, there was not a moment to lose. Other dragomans came in while he was talking, and told their respective patrons the same thing.

We all hurried down the steep street to the landing, our English adviser seeming less confident than before on the subject of the heavy lunch he had just eaten.

I walked with David.

"You can swim, sir," he said as we went along; "otherwise it would be folly to attempt the passage. I, myself, cannot swim, and therefore they forbid me to go out to the ship with you. I had hoped to take you there in my own boat with my own boatmen; it is a good boat, sir, and I wanted you to see it. But the sea is high, and order has been given that only Cook's boats shall go out to-day. And they will not let me go."

We laugh here in America and in Europe at Cook's tourists; and we say the term "dumb, driven cattle" takes on a new meaning when we see the poor, panting, submissive creatures rushed through the entire Vatican or the Louvre in eleven minutes. But in the East, Cook is a mighty power. His boats and boatmen are the finest and his agents the most efficient in the world. He has forty-one boatmen — all trained men — at Jaffa, and from this number sixteen picked men were chosen to man the strongest boat and carry us out to the steamer.

David came down the wave-washed steps with me, and at the foot we said "good-bye." I was heartily sorry to leave him, for he was not only the best dragoman, but also the most entertaining and considerate companion I ever met.

He is still in the business of dragoman and contractor, and I recommend him to any or all travelers in Syria. My personal recommendation is by itself of little weight; but, backed as it is by certificates from such men as the Duke of Connaught and Canon Tristan, both of whom have been among Jamal's "howajis," it may be of some value. At all events it can do no harm. A letter in advance addressed to "*David Jamal, Jerusalem, Syria*," will reach the dragoman and will ensure his services from the moment of landing to that of embarkation. He has guided many parties, large and small, and has always given perfect satisfaction.

We nine passengers were placed in the stern of the boat; our luggage was piled in after us; and the sixteen oarsmen, at a word of command, bent to work. They were a picturesque lot, these trained athletes, with the bare masses of muscle that served them for arms and legs, and their weather-beaten, determined faces surmounted by the regulation close-fitting red cap and long tassel worn by all Eastern rowers.

They rowed steadily and regularly until the crazy breakwater was passed. Then the ball opened in sober earnest. The waves became ten times as high as before, and our heavy boat was tossed about like a feather.

As we came out into open sea the oarsmen sprang to

their feet with a shout, and, bracing themselves against the thwarts, threw their whole weight and force on the long oars, breaking at the same moment into a rhythmic shout of "*Allah sa-ïd. — Allah sa-ïd.*" (*All-ah-sy-eed*), "God help us! God save us!" This they continued throughout the trip, keeping perfect stroke, never intermitting the terrible strain, and always with that one chant.

The excitement grew intense. At one moment we would be in the trough of the sea, with waves rising green on either side, far above our heads, until nothing could be seen but two dark walls of water, with a patch of blue sky gleaming above their white crests; the next instant we were tossing high in the air on a mountain of water, in full sight of the hundreds who watched us from the shore. I could make out among the throng on the beach one dark figure that stood dejectedly apart from the rest trying to wave his white handkerchief with an air of encouragement. It was David, and I waved back to him whenever I could make myself seen.

The roar of water and the blinding masses of spray, the rush of our boat through the waves, and the strong, regular chant shouted by the boatmen, as with fierce, set faces they threw themselves backward at each stroke, acted like champagne on the nerves, and filled one with the insane pleasure that excitement and danger so often bring. I can now appreciate the sentiments of the tourist who had once shot some dangerous Canadian rapids and who afterward declared he would not have missed the experience for a hundred dollars — or go through it again for a thousand.

I saw, in one of our risings, the steamer about a mile to the north, bearing down on us. After watching it rise and fall for a few moments I noticed that the land had also begun to rise and fall in a dizzying fashion; then I discovered that I was tired of my cigarette and that I didn't like tobacco anyway; so I stopped smoking. I was fast approaching the state where life seemed little more attractive than the tobacco, when my mind was luckily diverted by the Englishman whom I had met at luncheon and who now sat next to me.

He was deathly white, and every time we seemed on the point of drowning he looked almost hopeful.

In Daudet's *Tartarin de Tarascon*, the hero of the work undertakes to ride a camel in Algeria, and, after the first few rods, becomes desperately seasick — the motion of a camel is like that of a ship in a heavy sea — and implores the driver to stop; giving as an excuse that he, Tartarin, is a representative of France, and that France must not be disgraced. The driver, however, keeps on, unheeding, and "The red fez sank lower and lower — and — France was disgraced!"

Great Britain's representative, despite his illustrated lecture on the advantage of a heavy luncheon before sailing, had evidently not reckoned on being rocked in the cradle of the deep in this fashion; so, after glaring stonily at the world in general for some minutes he collapsed, a total wreck, in the bottom of the boat, where he lay for the rest of the trip, and — England "was disgraced."

M. La Roche, the Marseillaise tourist, still remained valiant. He was scornfully forgetful of the sea, and spent the time in reassuring his wife — who sat sto-

lidly looking into space — and in humming an air from *Rigoletto*.

The Americans sat quiet, with neither the abandon of woe shown by the Englishman, nor the bravado of the Frenchman.

As the ship came alongside, La Roche, who sat with his back to it and was therefore unaware of its nearness, was saying to his wife in the most encouraging style: —

"*Point de danger, ma chère; point de danger, je t'assure!*"

Turning suddenly, he saw the ship directly over his head, gang-plank down, and with sailors waiting to lift us aboard. The horror of the situation and the peril of being caught — or missed — by men in mid-air and of being hauled up that slippery surface, burst upon him; and the good-natured cynicism fled as by magic from his face. He gazed blankly at the ship for an instant, his face growing paler and his aspiring moustaches seeming to wilt; then seizing his wife despairingly by the arm he shrieked to the whole boatload, —

"*Ne bougez pas! Ne bougez point! C'est une atrocité!*"

As he saw the preparations for boarding go on despite his remonstrance, he rolled to the bottom of the boat in a paroxysm of fear, and crouched there trembling all over. Despite our seasickness no one could help laughing, and the laugh did us good.

By this time we were well alongside, and began to be lifted, one by one, to the ship. Every time we arose on the crest of a wave two oarsmen would lift a passenger out of the boat for two sailors to catch from above and deposit on the gang-plank. Meanwhile, the boat would once more sink far into the trough of the

sea, and another passenger would prepare to be lifted out.

The first victim chanced to be our English acquaintance. He was by this time too nearly void of life and will to help in the operation, but suffered himself to be drawn out like a telescope to an astounding length, and to be pulled rope-like to the deck. I came next, so I cannot say how the French family fared.

The vessel only paused long enough to let us get on board, then started on, leaving the plucky oarsmen to get their boat back to shore as they could.

I watched the landing-steps until the waving handkerchief and at last the town itself faded from sight. As I turned, with an almost homesick feeling, to go below, I heard the Englishman, who had by this time quite recovered, say to a fellow-passenger: —

"My dragoman asked me, when I stopped at Jaffa, if I would like to go to the house of Simon the Tanner. I fancy Simon must be some friend of his that sells things, you know. He said I ought not to miss going there; but I told him I didn't know the man he spoke of, and what was more I didn't care to make his acquaintance."

And this was one of the class who can afford to travel!

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 019 953 999 1